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**NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON
TO SERVE AS
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**

HEARING

[BEFORE THE]

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

FEBRUARY 13, 2025

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions



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ON

EXAMINING THE NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON, OF CONNECTICUT,
TO BE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

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**NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON
TO SERVE AS
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**

Thursday, February 13, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m., in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bill Cassidy, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Cassidy [presiding], Collins, Murkowski, Marshall, Scott, Hawley, Tuberville, Banks, Husted, Moody, Britt, Sanders, Murray, Baldwin, Murphy, Kaine, Hassan, Hickenlooper, Markey, Kim, Blunt Rochester, and Alsobrooks.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASSIDY

The CHAIR. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will please come to order. Ms. McMahon, I appreciate you coming before the Committee today.

You were very successful leading the Small Business Administration in President Trump's first term and I am glad the President has given you another opportunity to serve. You have enormous challenges.

At the K through 12 level, students who were behind before the pandemic are even further behind now. According to the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, reading scores among fourth and eighth graders declined five points since the pandemic. In math, fourth grade scores fell by five points, and eighth grade scores fell by eight points.

The failures of the traditional K through 12 schools are leading more families to try other education options proven to help students succeed like charter schools. The Biden-Harris Department of Education tried to take these options away from families.

They passed onerous regulations making it harder for charter schools to apply for Federal grants, impeding their ability to grow and to serve more children. The Department of—the Department's bloated bureaucracy failed to improve the Nation's education system and quite likely made it worse.

There has been a lot of talk about dismantling the Department of Education, and I am sure that you will be asked this today. But before we begin, I want to explain what the Department of Education actually does.

On average, only about 10 percent of public funds that go toward educating a child comes from the Federal taxpayer. That is only 10 percent. 90 percent comes from state and local government.

While the Federal Government accounts for a small minority of the funding, it is responsible for the vast majority of bureaucracy and red tape preventing communities from improving educational success.

I am hearing from schools across the country that they have stopped going after Federal competitive grant funding because it is not worth the hoops and red tape the Department of Education has placed on those dollars.

If schools are not eager to apply for competitive grants to improve operations, something is wrong and something should change. It is not only the K through 12 system failing students. Colleges and universities are not preparing students to succeed in the modern workforce.

The cost of higher education are quickly outpacing the value of the degrees students receive. According to a nonpartisan analysis, 23 percent of bachelor's degree programs and 43 percent of master's degrees have a negative return on investment.

Too many students leave college woefully unprepared for the workforce after being saddled with overwhelming debt they cannot pay off. Under the last Administration, the Department of Education's only answer was to transfer hundreds of billions of dollars, that is hundreds of billions, in student debt from those who willingly took it on to supposedly advance their life—they transferred it to Americans who either chose not to go to college or had already paid their way through school.

To implement these schemes, the Department dramatically increased the scope and authority of the student loan financing program, clearly outside of what Congress previously intended. Your experience overseeing SBA loans will be a great asset as the Department looks to reform a very broken student loan program.

We have also seen rampant anti-Semitism on college campuses, leading to attacks and harassment of Jewish students. I am pleased to see the Trump administration has already launched investigations, and I look forward to working with you, presuming that you are confirmed.

The status quo is not working. The educational system is failing our children. The Biden-Harris Department of Education stood in the way of students' success. Transformative change of the educational establishment is needed.

The Department needs to get out of the way of states and local communities who are best positioned to actually address students' needs. We need to empower parents, so they have a voice in their child's education. This includes increasing access to school choice, perhaps also called parental choice, so families can give their child every opportunity to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

With President Trump in office and Ms. McMahan's leadership, we have a real opportunity to accomplish this. Thank you again, Ms. McMahan for coming before this Committee and continue the

discussion on how we can work together to improve students' success and get our education system back on track.

With that, I yield to Senator Sanders, the Ranking Member.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SANDERS

Senator SANDERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mrs. McMahan, nice to see you again. Let me begin by thanking teachers all over this country. This is a very difficult time to be a teacher.

Talking to teachers in Vermont, and I think teachers all over the country, what they are telling me as they are spending a lot of their time not only teaching math and English, but dealing with the emotional needs of kids, because among other things, our kids are struggling in many, many ways.

It is a tough time to be a teacher, and I want to thank the teachers very much for the extraordinary work that they are doing, especially for some of the most vulnerable kids in our Country.

Way back in 1863, as we recall from our history books, Abraham Lincoln was in Gettysburg and he looked out on a field where soldiers by the thousands had just died in the struggle against slavery and he talked about the need to maintain a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

That was a short but very powerful Gettysburg Address. And I think in this country today, there is a growing fear that instead of having a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, we are looking at a government of billionaires, by billionaires, and for billionaires whose job is not to improve life for ordinary people, but to make the people on top even wealthier.

In the midst of massive income and wealth inequality with three people owning more wealth than the bottom half of American society, the Republicans in the House yesterday introduced a budget resolution that would provide massive tax breaks to the people on top and they would pay for those tax breaks for billionaires by cutting Medicaid, education, and programs that working families throughout this country desperately need. That is exactly the wrong thing to do.

At a time when millions and millions of working families are struggling, our job is to protect those families and not worry about the billionaires who have never had it so good. But it is not just cuts in Medicaid, as devastating as that would be. We are looking at, if the Republicans get their way, massive cuts to education.

I should also say that the people who are trying to privatize Social Security, privatize Medicare, privatize Medicaid, privatize the Veterans Administration are precisely the same people who are trying to privatize public education in America. We must not allow that to happen.

In America, we must not allow our educational system to become a two tier system, a system which says that if you have the money, you are going to get help from the Federal Government, you are going to get a voucher to send your kid to a school that may cost \$50,000, \$60,000 a year, while the public schools will end up being segregated not just by race but by class.

Most families in America do not have \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 a year to send their kids to private schools and it is absurd to provide public money to make that possible. Our job is not to take away money from public schools to give it to private schools. It is to strengthen public education in America.

Further, President Trump has talked about abolishing the Department of Education. Yes, I think everybody on this Committee wants to see us go after waste and bureaucracy in every agency of government, but what we must understand is that when we talk about the Department of Education, they are providing vital resources for 26 million children in this country who live in high poverty school districts.

Is it the responsibility of the Federal Government to say that every kid in America, whether you are poor, middle class, rich, gets a quality education? It is. And that is what a lot of what the Department of Education does.

Department of Education provides millions of public school students who have disabilities, emotional problems, physical problems, provides them with help. It provides Pell grants and other important financial assistance that over 7 million low income students need to get a higher education.

The goal is not to abolish the Department of Education. It is to make it more effective and to make sure that it addresses the educational needs in this country. Mr. Chairman, in my view, we need a Secretary of Education who understands that in the wealthiest nation in the history of the world, we should have the best educational system on this planet, from childcare to graduate school.

We need a Secretary of Education who understands that if we are going to attract the best and the brightest to the teaching profession, you know what? We have to pay teachers the kinds of salaries that they deserve, which is why I have introduced legislation that says no teacher in America should earn less than \$60,000 a year.

We need a Secretary of Education who understands that schools do not end at 2.30 p.m., at 3.00 p.m.. We need strong afterschool programs. We need strong summer programs. We need a Secretary of Education who understands that we have got to invest in mental health.

We need a Secretary of Education who understands that we have got to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. So there are a lot of questions I have for Mrs. McMahan. I very much appreciate her being here and look forward to the discussion we will have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Sanders.

Now to introduce Ms. McMahan, we will start with Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member. Thank you, Committee Members for allowing me to have an opportunity to talk about my good friend Linda McMahan.

I will say that one of the things I love about the Ranking Member is his passion about the things he cares deeply about. He and I don't agree on the conclusions or the solutions, but I do believe

that he is a thoughtful person who cares about the issues, and I hope that doesn't hurt your reelection bid.

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. Let me say this, I am not a billionaire. Never have been. Likely never will be. But I am a kid who grew up in a single parent household mired in poverty whose mother worked two jobs trying to keep the lights on. I went to four different elementary schools by the fourth grade.

When I think about the issue of education, I think about how in the world did we ever get to a meritocracy where the vast majority of the kids today are going to segregated schools that are failing those kids. 13 schools in Maryland where the average kid—no, I am sorry, 99 percent of the kids cannot perform at grade level.

I think about Chicago on the South side, where I spent a lot of time, where 95 percent of the kids cannot perform at grade level. I think about Charleston, South Carolina, my hometown, where 60 plus percent of African American males don't go to college.

I think about the quagmire pit of failure that is consistently the case in inner city schools across America. You talk about the resegregation of America's public schools. It has already happened. It is happening right now. Our public education spends \$850 billion to disappoint families, millions of families, across this country.

10 percent of the resources come from the Federal Government, and yet 80 to 90 percent of all the rules that suppress performance come from Washington. The average employee at the Department of Education—these numbers are a few years ago, and these, unfortunately, aren't part of my speech.

Bernie changed my speech for me. It is about \$106,000 where the average teacher makes \$55,000. Those numbers are four, 5 years old. But here is my point. My point is the simple point. I am a guy who understands the weight of a poor education system and the benefit of a good education system because I have experienced both.

I chose to introduce Linda not because I have an affinity for billionaires—though I might now, actually. Because I have a passion for quality that changes the trajectory of poor kids' lives permanently. I can't think of a more important civil rights issue today than public education and the education of our kids.

I can't think of a better person to take on that challenge than someone that I have confidence when she was the Administrator of the SBA. I can't think of someone better to take on this challenge than someone that took a regional company, WWE, and made it into the global powerhouse that it is today—than the Co-Founder, Chief Executive, Linda McMahon.

I can't think of someone better to do the job than someone who served on our own State Board of Education, who was a trustee at Sacred Heart University, and who led the policy initiatives at the America First Policy Institute.

That would be Linda McMahon. I can tell you that there are a lot of questions I would like to answer, but I don't have time. But I can tell you this, for the poorest kids in our Country, disillusioned

about the American dream, the answers they are looking for rarely come from Washington.

With all of our good intentions, the Department of Education has simply failed the poorest kids in the United States of America, the greatest nation on the planet. To turn that around, we need someone who has already succeeded in business and in government. And let me just close with this.

The Department of Education doesn't educate kids. It is a Federal agency. Local communities and local teachers educate kids. Our Department of Education is a Federal behemoth that needs to focus on getting more money in the hands of more students so that they have a better chance.

Yes, I do believe that competition makes your quality go up and your cost go down. Charter schools prove that. Private schools prove that. And finally, Pell Grants. Pell Grants take public dollars to private schools. Unfortunately for black kids today, the vast majority won't have a Pell Grant.

Why? Because if you don't graduate from high school, if you don't have proficiency in reading, math, and Science, the likelihood of you going to college is zero. Let's improve our K through 12 system so that more of America's poor, rural kids and inner city kids both have the experience I had of realizing their version of the American dream.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Scott. Very powerful.
Senator Britt.

Senator BRITT. Well, that was amazing. Thank you. My colleague nailed it. Chair Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of this Committee, I am honored to join you today to introduce President Trump's nominee for Secretary of Education, my friend Linda McMahon.

It is clear that our current education system isn't working. We have the status quo and that is actually failing our kids. As you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, the latest NAEP scores show that students' reading and math scores are down in almost every single state, to the point where only 30 percent of eighth graders are meeting reading proficiency levels.

The status quo in education just hasn't failed students. It has failed parents just like me. And very respectfully, Mr. Ranking Member, the America that you just described, the one that you are fearful will be created, it already exists.

Our students deserve better. Our parents deserve better. We have to do something different in order to achieve a different result. For far too long, the Department of Education has catered to far left bureaucrats at the expense of moms and dads.

It has pushed for school closures, removed parental rights from the equation, promoted radical ideologies in the classroom, and supported allowing men and boys to play in women and girls sports. Enough is enough.

We need a change agent at the Department of Education, and that change agent is Linda McMahon. She is the perfect antidote to what is wrong with education in this country. Linda has an immensely successful track record as a business executive, as a leader

of a government agency, and at the America First policy—as an America First policy advocate.

She is not just an overwhelmingly qualified nominee for Secretary of Education, but a nominee who can make a real difference at the Department that sorely needs it. She is also a grandmother of six with a personal stake in the quality of our education system.

She understands how important it is that our kids learn what they are supposed to and how important it is for parents to be empowered. I am right there with her. And that is not the only mission that Linda will pursue at the Secretary of Education—as the Secretary.

Attending a 4-year college or university is the right path for many Americans, but it is not the only one available to graduating high schoolers and Linda will ensure that students know that.

Linda led efforts to empower the American worker at AFPI. And I am confident that she will make aligning our education system and our workforce systems a priority at the Department of Education.

That means strengthening 21st century skills training and job preparedness, bridging the gap between technical school programs and industries, and expanding apprenticeships and credentialing programs.

Linda McMahan is someone who knows how to reform our education system, so it actually prepares our kids for the future, while also empowering parents to make decisions that affect their children's lives. She has the experience as an executive. She already demonstrated her immense ability to get the government out of the way as head of the Small Business Administration.

She knows both K–12 and higher education, as my distinguished colleague Senator Scott said, in serving on the Connecticut State Board of Education and the Sacred Heart University Board. She was on that since 2004.

Her confirmation as Secretary of Education will be a monumental step toward preserving the American dream and making a bright future possible for the next generation of Americans. Let's put parents in the driver's seat.

Let's return to the fundamentals of the classroom learning and teach kids the skills they need to actually achieve their goals. Let's put education in the hands of states, not unaccountable Federal bureaucrats.

For our kids' sake, let's confirm my friend, Linda McMahan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Britt. Ms. McMahan, now for your opening statement. And you are welcome to introduce your guest.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you very much, Chairman Cassidy. Yes, I would like to introduce my daughter, Stephanie McMahan, Paul Levesque, her husband, and my son, Shane McMahan. I am so happy to have them here and many friends from—have come from far places, so I welcome having them here today and appreciate that they are here.

[Background demonstrators.]

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you, Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am honored to have your consideration to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Education. And I would like to thank both Senator Scott and Britt for their introductions.

The CHAIR. Members of the audience are reminded that disruptions will not be permitted while the Committee—

[technical problems]

We ask you to respect that, please.

STATEMENT OF LINDA MCMAHON TO SERVE AS SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Ms. MCMAHON. Certainly. And I would like to thank both Senator Scott and Britt for their introductions, and for the opportunity to welcome my friends and family. Thank you all so much for being here with me today.

I would also like to thank President Trump for his confidence in me to lead a Department whose mission and authority were a special focus of his campaign. He pledged to make American education the best in the world, return education to the states where it belongs, and free American students from the education bureaucracy through school choice.

November proved that Americans overwhelmingly support the President's vision, and I am ready to enact it. Education is the issue that determines our national success and prepares American workers to win the future.

I have been passionate about education since my earliest college days when I studied to earn a teaching certificate. This has continued through my business career as a Connecticut State Board of Education member, as a university trustee, and as the Chair of the America First Policy Institute, which advocates for workforce development, parental choice and accountability in higher education.

I am also a mother and a grandmother, and I join millions of American parents who want better schools for our kids and grandkids. The legacy of our Nation's leadership in education is one that every person in this room embraces with pride. Unfortunately, many Americans today are experiencing a system in decline.

The latest scores from the Nation's report card show achievement in K through 12 math and reading at their lowest level in years. More than two-thirds of public colleges are beset by violent crime on campuses every year. And most tragically, students' suicide rates have dramatically increased over the last two decades.

We can do better. We can do better for the elementary and junior high school student by teaching basic reading and mathematics, for the college freshmen facing censorship or antisemitism on campus, and for parents and grandparents who worry that their children and grandchildren are no longer taught American values and true history.

In many cases, our wounds are caused by the excessive consolidation of power in our Federal education establishment. So what

is the remedy? Fund education freedom, not government run systems. Listen to parents, not politicians.

Build up careers, not college debt. Empower states, not special interests. Invest in teachers, not Washington bureaucrats. If confirmed as Secretary, I will work with Congress to reorient the Department toward helping educators, not controlling them.

My experience as a business owner and leader of the Small Business Administration, as a public servant in the State of Connecticut, and more than a decade of service as a college trustee has taught me to put parents, teachers, and students, not bureaucracy, first.

Outstanding teachers are tired of political ideology and their curriculum and red tape on their desks, and that is why school choice is a growing movement across the Nation. It offers teachers and parents an alternative to classrooms that are micromanaged from Washington, DC.

We should also emphasize career focused education, especially in cutting edge STEM fields where American companies need high skill employees. Our workers deserve more post-secondary pathways, career aligned programs, apprenticeships, and on the job learning. The jobs in tech, skill trades, and health care for non-college degree holders.

Those who do it in college deserve transparent costs and courses of study aligned to workforce demand. The United States is the world leader by far in emerging technologies like AI and blockchain, and we need to invest in American students who want to become tech pioneers.

We should encourage innovative new institutions, develop smart accountability systems, and tear down barriers to entry so that students have real choice, and universities are not saddling future families with insurmountable debt.

We must protect all students from discrimination and harassment. And if I am confirmed, the Department will not stand idly by while Jewish students are attacked and discriminated against. It will stop forcing schools to let boys and men into female sports and spaces.

It will protect the rights of parents to direct the moral education of their children. The opportunity before us these next 4 years is momentous. I look forward to working with the Committee, our Nation's parents, teachers and students, and education leaders from all political perspectives to build a better future for every American learner.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McMahon follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LINDA MCMAHON

Thank you, Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and the distinguished Members of the Committee. I'm honored to have your consideration to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Education.

I would like to thank both Senators Scott and Britt for their introductions, and for the opportunity to welcome my friends and family—thank you all so much for being here today.

I would also like to thank President Trump for his confidence in me to lead a Department whose mission and authority were a special focus of his campaign. He pledged to make American education the best in the world, return education to the states where it belongs, and free American students from the education bureaucracy through school choice. November proved that Americans overwhelmingly support the President's vision—and I am ready to enact it.

Education is *the issue* that determines our national success and prepares American workers to win the future. I've been passionate about education since my earliest college days, when I studied to earn a teaching credential. This has continued through my business career as a Connecticut State board of education member, as a university trustee, and as the chair of the America First Policy Institute, which advocates for workforce development, parental choice, and accountability in higher education. Most importantly, I'm also a mother and grandmother—and I join millions of American parents who want better schools for our kids and grandkids.

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The latest scores from the Nation's Report Card show achievement in K12 math and reading at their lowest levels since 1971, the first year of testing. More than two thirds of public colleges are beset by violent crime on campus every year. And most tragically, student suicide rates have dramatically increased over the last two decades.

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For the elementary and junior high student by teaching basic reading and mathematics.

For the college freshman facing censorship or antisemitism on campus.

For parents and grandparents who worry that their children and grandchildren are no longer taught American values and true history.

In many cases, our wounds are caused by the excessive consolidation of power in our Federal education establishment.

The remedy?

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We should also emphasize career-focused education, especially in cutting-edge STEM fields where American companies need high-skill employees. Our workers deserve more post-secondary pathways: career-aligned programs, apprenticeships and on-the-job learning, and jobs in tech, skilled trades, and healthcare for non-college degree holders.

Those who do attend college deserve transparent costs and courses of study aligned to workforce demand. The United States is the world leader by far in emerging technologies like AI and blockchain—and we need to invest in American students who want to become tech pioneers. We should encourage innovative new institutions, develop smart accountability systems, and tear down barriers to entry so that students have real choice and universities are not saddling future families with insurmountable debt.

We must protect all students from discrimination and harassment. If I am confirmed, the Department will not stand idly by while Jewish students are attacked and discriminated against. It will stop forcing schools to let boys and men into female sports and spaces. And it will protect the rights of parents to direct the moral education of their children.

The opportunity before us these next 4 years is momentous. I look forward to working with this Committee, our Nation's parents, teachers, and students, and education leaders from all political perspectives to build a better future for every American learner.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome your questions.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. I shall begin. Everybody is rightly focused on the fact that we have a problem with reading scores, and they have been anchored where they are for quite some time with an incredibly high percentage of children not reading at grade level.

The old kind of truism that kids learn to read by grade 3 or 4 and they read to learn thereafter. But they are not learning to read by grade 3 or 4. So that said, dyslexia, according to NIH kind of reviewed literature, affects 20 percent of our population.

Those 20 percent learn to read differently, and if their differences are not acknowledged, then they will be among those, almost an anchor holding reading scores down. Now, it would just intuitively make sense to diagnose the child with dyslexia as early as possible. Most states do not screen.

That said, you can see where I am going with my own thoughts. But what would be your approach to addressing the issue of dyslexia, which is frankly ignored? Not in a State like New Hampshire where Governor Hassan actually put in such programs, but in other states.

What would be your approach to make sure that the child who is dyslexic is diagnosed at an early stage and receives the intervention that she or he would need to receive?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, thank you very much, Chairman Cassidy. And I know this is a very sensitive subject for you, since I believe it is your son that does have dyslexia, as you and I discussed when I visited with you in your office.

The CHAIR. My daughter, but that is Okay.

Ms. MCMAHON. I am sorry. It is your daughter. But I certainly very much would like to be sure that we are looking to diagnose issues like this, like dyslexia early because we have found that it can be turned around. So I would like to work with you and understand how we could have a better approach for that in our school systems.

The CHAIR. You had mentioned that you would not tolerate the anti-Semitism that has been on the rise. What steps would you take to make sure the backlog of anti-Semitism cases at the Office of Civil Rights is processed and those responsible for illegal discrimination held accountable?

Ms. MCMAHON. Senator Kennedy, I think that—Cassidy, I am sorry. I think that by far what we saw happening on our campuses was absolutely deplorable. Kids locked in libraries afraid to come out.

Now, I believe in freedom of speech on campus, open debate, and we should encourage that, but we cannot allow violence happening on our campuses. That puts all students in an unsafe place.

As the—if I were confirmed as the Secretary of Education, I would want to make sure that the presidents of those universities and those colleges are taking very strong measures not to allow this to happen.

They can call in the police. They can do whatever they need to do to set standards and to make sure those standards are upheld. We cannot allow that kind of violence to take place on our college campuses.

The CHAIR. There is a current backlog in the Office of Civil Rights within the Department of Education to address this. Do you have any specific plans about how you could help them address that backlog?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I would like very much to be confirmed and to be able to get into the Department and understand that backlog, to talk to those lawyers who were there. And let's focus on what we need to do to clear out that backlog, and I look forward to doing that.

The CHAIR. As President Trump has reported—is reportedly drafting an Executive Order requiring the Secretary of Education to develop a plan for downsizing the Department of Education and working with Congress to eliminate entirely, yes or no, do you agree that since the Department was created by Congress, it would need an act of Congress to actually close the Department of Education?

Ms. MCMAHON. Certainly President Trump understands that we will be working with Congress. We would like to do this right. We would like to make sure that we are presenting a plan that I think our Senators could get on board with and our Congress could get on board with that would have a better functioning Department of Education. But certainly, it does require Congressional action.

The CHAIR. Okay. And in terms of the plans to downsize, what would be the components of that plan that would not require Congressional approval?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I do believe, Senator, that there are Departments of Education that are established by statute. And in those particular departments, we would have to pay particular attention too. But long before there was a Department of Education, we fulfilled the programs of our educational system.

Are there other areas, other agencies where parts of the Department of Education could better serve our students and our parents on a local level? And I am really all for the President's mission, which is to return education to the states.

I believe, as he does, that the best education is closest to the child and certainly from Washington DC.

The CHAIR. If the Department is downsized, would these states and localities still receive the Federal funding which they currently—[technical problems]?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes.

The CHAIR. Okay. With that, I—

Ms. MCMAHON. It is not the President's goal to defund the programs. It is only to have it operate more efficiently.

The CHAIR. With that, I yield to Senator Sanders.

Senator SANDERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we talk about education, we are looking at it in a vacuum. We are talking about the struggles that low income kids are having. And that is true.

But Mrs. McMahan, you are also aware that in America we have more income and wealth inequality than we have ever had before. You are aware that we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major country on Earth.

You are aware, I suspect, that teachers are dealing with kids who are literally homeless. Kids who come from dysfunctional families where there is violence. Does it concern you in America that we are living in a society where the people on top are doing phenomenally well while 60 percent of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck? And how do you think that impacts our educational system?

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you very much, Senator, for that question. First of all, let me say that I believe that teaching is one of the most noble professions that we have in our Country, and we have so many good, dedicated teachers to help our students. I do think that we are trapping students often in low performing schools, and that is why the President has such a strong policy toward school choice.

Senator SANDERS. But you will agree—I don't mean to interrupt you. But you will agree that you can't just look at education—the truth is that middle class, upper middle class public schools in America generally do pretty well.

But if you are homeless, if you were a homeless person and you had kids, the odds of your kids doing pretty well—and I am just asking you, what do you think about the massive level of income and wealth inequality, the fact that we have the highest rate of childhood poverty? Is that something you think you might want to pay attention to?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly, Senator, I do believe that we want to make sure that every child in our Country has the opportunity to have equal access to a quality education. And the Department of Education really is not setting economic policy in the country. We should focus on educating our children and we should focus on it at the local level.

Senator SANDERS. Let me ask you this. You have mentioned correctly that we have many great teachers in America, right?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes.

Senator SANDERS. If you as a businesswoman wanted to attract the best and the brightest, would you be starting them off after they leave school maybe \$50,000, \$60,000 in debt with salaries of \$35,000 or \$40,000.

Or would you say we respect—you have talked about teaching being the noblest profession. I agree with you. Would you agree with me, support my legislation that says no teacher in America should earn at least \$60,000 a year?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly the pay to teachers is up to the states where those teachers reside. I do believe we should pay our

teachers fairly. They spend so much time with their students and they should be well compensated for their job.

Senator SANDERS. All right. But paying them fairly, nobody in the world will disagree with you. I mean, the question is, if teaching is a noble profession, if teaching is an important profession should we be paying them salaries commensurate with the value that they—of the work that they are doing? So I am asking you a simple question, would you recommend to states, as the leader of education in America, that teachers at least make \$60,000 a year?

Ms. MCMAHON. I would certainly recommend to states that teachers be paid what is commensurate with the kinds of jobs that are part of their states. Not all states have the same living costs.

Not all states have the same ability to pay teachers. But to attract really good teachers and to keep them, we should definitely pay them commensurate with the job performance that they are undertaking.

Senator SANDERS. Millions of young people, low income people, are finding it very difficult to afford to go to college. And they are leaving school \$50,000, \$100,000, \$200,000 in debt.

Pell Grant program provides assistance to over 7 million low income young people in this country. Can you guarantee to us, if you are made a Secretary of Education, that no student in America will lose their Pell grant as one—as that Department is dismantled?

Ms. MCMAHON. Surely the defunding is not the goal here. The continuation of Pell Grants—I would actually even like to see an expansion of Pell Grants. I would like to see short term certificates for Pell Grants for students who aren't going on to 4 year universities, who could have the opportunity to use Pell Grants for skill based learning.

Senator SANDERS. What I am hearing you say is the Pell Grant program will continue under your Administration?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes.

Senator SANDERS. Okay. Mister—Senator Cassidy asked you an important question, and that is, do you agree—and let me just once again get your feelings on this—that if there is a movement to abolish the Department of Education, it has to go through the United States Congress?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, it is set up by the U.S. Congress and we work with Congress. It clearly cannot be shut down without it.

Senator SANDERS. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Senator Collins.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you.

Senator COLLINS. Welcome. First of all, let me say I was very pleased to hear your strong commitment to enforcing the Office of Civil Rights jurisdiction over the many incidences, horrible incidences of the anti-Semitism that we have seen on our college campuses.

Among the important programs that are administered by the Department of Education are Title I, IDEA, TRIO programs, all of which have been high priorities for me. I want to briefly discuss those programs.

Title I helps public schools that are serving low income students. It helps level the playing field in terms of resources compared to more affluent communities. In Maine, 63 percent of our public schools receive Title I funds, very important to our state.

Second, IDEA, the Disabilities and Education Act, which helps children with special needs. Maine receives more than \$65 million to support K through 12 students with special education needs.

I would note that falls far short of the 40 percent that was promised when the legislation was passed in the 1970's. TRIO programs, which we have discussed, have changed the lives of countless first generation students who are going to college and come from families with no experience with higher education.

I have seen so many success stories as a result of TRIO. So my question for you is how do we maintain the administration and oversight of these programs if we abolish or substantially reorganize the Department of Education?

Ms. McMAHON. Thank you, Senator Collins. And I know how passionate you are about these issues, and I enjoyed meeting with you in your office and talking about these various things, especially I think the TRIO program which we both agreed was just hit a terrible blow just by regulation with some of the students who were applying, their applications were rejected simply because of spacing on a form.

Senator COLLINS. Right.

Ms. McMAHON. That kind of regulatory control just cannot stand. That is just impossible. The Title I programs that you have been—discussed will continue to be appropriated through Congress. Today, they go directly to the State Departments of Education and then are distributed to the districts.

Not looking to defund or reduce any of those amounts. IDEA is the same. But might it be better served in a different agency? I am not sure. It started at HEW, and the concerns for disabilities and health issues with students may very well rest better within an agency that has more oversight of all of those.

I think if I am confirmed to be able to get in and assess programs how they can have the best oversight possible, how we can really take the bureaucracy out of education and focus on teaching our children to read and to do math, and to appreciate our history, is certainly my goal and would be my goal as the Secretary of Education.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you. On Monday, the Administration announced that the Department of Education was going to terminate 89 contracts from the Institute of Education Sciences. They were worth \$881 million.

As well as terminating 29 training grants. This week, my office heard from a former teacher from Oakland, Maine who has developed a high impact tutoring model, and it is currently being used in 12 schools in Maine alone, and she has one of the grant applications pending to more thoroughly evaluate the impact of this model on the students' outcomes.

She is worried that it is now going to be in jeopardy due to these sudden cuts. Considering the poor reading and math scores re-

ported by NAEP, and that unfortunately includes poor scores in my home state, shouldn't the Department of Education continue to collect data and evaluate outcomes rather than to halt these activities so that you can help states know what works?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, thank you, Senator. And it is my goal, if I am confirmed, to get in and assist these kinds of programs, because I am not sure yet what the impact of all of those programs are.

I know that there are many worthwhile programs that we should keep, but I am not—I am not yet apprised of them. I want to study them. I would like to get back and talk to you more and to work with you. I look forward to working with this Committee and all of Congress to make sure we can deliver for our education.

[Background protestors.]

Senator COLLINS. Thank you. I appreciate your responses. Thank you.

[Background demonstrators.]

Senator MURKOWSKI. The Committee will come to order.

Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you. Ms. McMahan, Elon Musk's DOGE staffers have reportedly set up camp at the Department of Education.

They have already been given access to highly sensitive student data and have already started holding back money that Congress decided on a bipartisan basis was needed to help our schools and students.

We are also hearing, about an Executive Order coming any day that will seek to dismantle the Department of Education. These are bipartisan laws. You indicated that you understood that, that the Congress has passed these laws, but a lot of turmoil is happening. You heard it from my colleague just asking that question now.

I want to ask you, if confirmed, do you commit to getting every dollar we have invested in our students and schools out to them?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, the appropriated dollars and those moneys that are passed by Congress, yes.

I have no issue, however, with the fact—and I believe the American people spoke loudly in the election last November to say that they want to look at waste, fraud, and abuse in our government.

DOGE, there are a couple of implants at the Department of Education as there are with agencies throughout the district and they are doing an audit. And it is—

Senator MURRAY. Right. I understand and audit, but when Congress appropriates money, it is the Administration's responsibility to put that out as directed by Congress who has the power of the purse.

What will you do if the President or Elon Musk tells you not to spend money Congress has appropriated to you?

Ms. MCMAHON. We will certainly spend those dollars that Congress has passed. But I do think it is worthwhile to take a look at the programs before money goes out the door. It is much easier—it is much easier—

Senator MURRAY. I understand that but—

Ms. MCMAHON [continuing]. To stop the money as is going out the door than it is to claw it back.

Senator MURRAY. Process by law is that you look at that, you make recommendations to Congress, and we implement those laws.

I mean, the question really is who decides how much Federal funding public schools get in Seattle, where it has already been allocated. The school district, or Elon Musk, or Congress?

I think Congress has been pretty clear that the purse lies here. We passed our appropriations bills. We expect those programs to count. If you have input, if you have programs you have looked at that you believe are not effective, then it is your job to come to us, explain why, and get the support for that.

Ms. MCMAHON. Okay.

Senator MURRAY. Let me move on. Ms. McMahon, I believe that our Nation's students, families, and taxpayers do want true accountability. They do want improvement in our schools. Back in 2015, Congress came together in a bipartisan way to replace the No Child Left Behind Act with the new law, Every Student Succeeds Act.

That was a bill I was very proud to negotiate with my Republican counterpart on this Committee—passed it into law. It gives states more flexibility in using their Federal education funds, it eliminated those one size fits all mandates that everyone hated, and it established some really strong Federal guardrails to hold states and schools accountable.

I believe that the Department of Education must do more to implement that law. Right now, less than 42 percent of our schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, or CSI as we call it.

Had a plan that met all the requirements of that law. And 1 in 5 schools plans included practices we know are ineffective. National assessment results, as you well know, released a few weeks ago show that our lowest performing students continue to fall furthest behind.

I want to ask you, what specific actions will you take to implement the ESSA law? I am not looking for an exhaustive list, but can you name a couple of the requirements that are in that law that you will make sure are implemented?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, Senator, thank you. And I would look forward to working with you and the Committee, understanding more about the ESSA law.

Senator MURRAY. Do you know what the requirements are? Do you know about the requirements for targeted support improvement schools or the annual report card reform? Can you name any of the requirements that are in that?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, I have—I have read through ESSA. And I do know—it is very interesting. It is how I really got into education in the first place was when No Child Left Behind was in place.

Senator MURRAY. But there are no requirements that you can tell me right now that you will make sure as Secretary of Education you will implement?

Ms. MCMAHON. No, I want to study it further and get back to you on that, and I will be happy to do that.

Senator MURRAY. Okay. Well, let me ask one last question. As I mentioned, DOGE staff have been given access in the Department of Education to personal information—personal information of students and families like their Social Security numbers, and their driver's license numbers, and their date of birth, what college they are enrolled in.

I know that the access has been temporarily paused due to litigation, but there is a real potential for that kind of information to be abused or for students' privacy to be placed in jeopardy if the courts end up ruling against the students.

We know that DOGE could use that highly personal information to then target students and target their families or cutoff access to Pell Grants for students at college that someone perceives opposes maybe President Trump policy.

I want to ask you, do you believe that DOGE employees should have access to private student data?

Ms. MCMAHON. It is my understanding that those employees have been onboarded as employees of the Department of Education and therefore they operate under the restraints of utilizing access of information and they are constrained by that.

Senator MURRAY. That is not our understanding. And I have to tell you—

Ms. MCMAHON. That is my understanding.

Senator MURRAY [continuing]. Deeply concerning that. We have DOGE staffers. We don't know who they are. They are not held accountable. Getting access to students private information. I think that should frighten everyone.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, again, I am not there yet—

Senator MURRAY. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. MCMAHON [continuing]. I am not there yet, but it is my understanding that they are onboarded fully employees.

Senator MURRAY. I hope if you do get there, that you make sure that students' private information is not given to someone who has no idea what or we have no idea how they are using it. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Senator Husted.

Senator HUSTED. Thank you. Ms. McMahan, thank you—or congratulations on your nomination.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you.

Senator HUSTED. Look forward to your confirmation, hopefully, and working with you on what is arguably one of the most important issues to the future of our Country and to our children. I would just simply ask you, if you believe that education is foundational to the opportunity to live your version of the American dream for children? You agree with that?

Ms. MCMAHON. I certainly do agree with that. And thank you very much, Senator, for that question. Education, I think, is at the very—it is at the very center of our culture. It is the ticket out of poverty for so many students.

It is how our children's minds are absolutely cultivated so that they can learn. And I remember listening to Senator Cassidy when he said that every child up until the third grade learns to read and then after the third grade reads to learn. And if children cannot read at a proficiency level, they cannot continue to learn.

They can't then be proficient in school. They can't go forward to higher education. They can't even start a business or do anything. So education I do believe that the very center of what we need to do, and to ensure that we have the best education for our students and that they all have equal access to quality education.

Senator HUSTED. Thank you. The issue of inequality has come up in this hearing. And I can tell you as a—when I started in my elected career, I was a Green State Legislator in the State of Ohio who had this strange notion that if children were trapped in chronically failing schools, that they should have the opportunity to go somewhere else.

Then I thought, who could be against that? And I quickly found out, well, there were a lot of people who were against that—powerful people, powerful institutions. And I just believe that we as Americans, we believe that freedom and choice is good. It is part of our DNA. It is good for markets and business.

That monopolies don't work, whether that is big business or big government. And that has been reinforced to me over the course of the—basically my lifetime that I have worked on this issue. Foundationally, or fundamentally, billionaires have choice.

Their children have choice. It is children that grow up in poverty that don't have choice. And that is an important element of fixing inequality because if we are going to—if we say that an education is foundational to living your version of the American dream, that you don't have the choice to go to a school that serves your needs, we basically have institutionalized a barrier against that opportunity and to have that equality of opportunity. Just share with me how you hope to fix that.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly the President, one of his cornerstones relative to education is school choice. He certainly does believe in universal school choice. And we have seen, I think that there are now, I believe the number of 33 states. I might be corrected on that. States that do have school choice.

What we have found that public schools come up. They are competitive. A lot of the concerns relative to school choice I think the statistics belie. We have students that are not leaving public schools in hordes and going to other schools, but they have the opportunity.

Parents look at their children and say, I want that for my child. My school is failing my child. So if I have the opportunity to have an educational savings account, or a voucher program, or a scholarship program to get my child maybe to that charter school or to that other public school that is doing better than the one that my

child is here because this is where I live, but I know that if I could get my child to that next school, they would be better off. Every parent wants that opportunity for their child.

Senator HUSTED. Thank you. And just quickly, I made some calls to superintendents in my State in Ohio before I came today and I said, would you prefer to have the money sent directly to you rather than through the Federal Department of Education?

Do you think you could do a better job if we released you from the rules and regulations and you just said—and they said, yes. Tell us what you want us to achieve. We will achieve it. We will do it.

I just wanted to share that with you. And that—I also want to give you a chance to answer this, that you are not, and President Trump is not talking about cutting any funding for children. You are not talking about cutting funding for disabled children.

You are just talking about changing the way that the money gets to these students in schools and that you are committed to that. Is that correct?

Ms. MCMAHON. That is correct, Senator. Thank you very much.

Senator HUSTED. Great. Thank you.

The CHAIR. It is now Senator Baldwin.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And before I start my questions, I just wanted to put some studies in the record.

Research studies of private school vouchers in Louisiana, Indiana, Ohio, and Washington, DC. showed that students who used these vouchers performed worse academically than their public school peers.

I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record those four studies that show private school vouchers have a negative impact on student achievement.

The CHAIR. Without objection.

[The following information can be found on page 53 in Additional Material:]

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mrs. McMahon, I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you last month, and I believe in giving all the President's nominees a fair shake.

That is what the people of Wisconsin expect from me, and I look forward to hearing more about your approach to running the Department of Education if confirmed. Mrs. McMahon, since 1972, Title IX has been a critical tool in ensuring that all students are protected from sex based discrimination in federally funded education programs.

We briefly discussed Title IX in our meeting, but I would like to ask you a series of yes or no questions to get into a little bit more detail here. So yes or no, do you believe that Title IX should be enforced to protect students from sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, I do.

Senator BALDWIN. Do you believe that sexual harassment that is severe should be prohibited under Title IX?

Ms. MCMAHON. I think sexual harassment should be prohibited in any case.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you. Do you believe that sexual harassment that is pervasive should be prohibited by Title IX?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes.

Senator BALDWIN. Do you believe that harassment that is either severe or pervasive should be prohibited under Title IX?

Ms. MCMAHON. I don't believe there should be any acceptance of sexual harassment, Senator.

Senator BALDWIN. Great. Because I am glad you actually agree with President Trump's efforts during his first term to narrow what qualifies as sexual harassment under Title IX. He—his guidance said that sexual harassment had to be severe and pervasive.

I hope that you will take your position and press for that to be the law, but right now, the Title IX is limited to sexual harassment that is severe and pervasive, not severe or pervasive.

Yes or no, if an assault occurs between two student but it happens off campus, do you think the school should have the ability to investigate that matter?

Ms. MCMAHON. I think the school should investigate that matter. And I believe under the regulations today, and I could be corrected on that, that they are obligated to investigate.

Senator BALDWIN. Okay. And do you believe that the school then, after investigation, should have the ability to take actions regarding an incident that occurs off campus?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes. I think the school should be required to take those actions, and to investigate, and to notify the parties that are involved and that—so that both sides of the equation can have due process.

Senator BALDWIN. I appreciate your answer. It is not entirely clear at this matter in this—at this time that the incidents would not only be investigated but adjudicated as to the school's adjudication rules.

The problem with that, as I am sure you are well aware, is that you would have the potential of a victim of sexual assault facing the potential—attending class with their perpetrator. Despite how much this Administration likes to talk about protecting women and girls, the actions have not matched the rhetoric.

I think instead of actually protecting women and girls, this Administration is not making school a safer place for anyone while using this topic as a way to fearmonger and demonize others. Mrs. McMahon, you have been named in a lawsuit which alleges that you and your husband allowed for systemic and pervasive abuse of underage children to persist in your business for years.

It is an ongoing lawsuit, and it alleges that you rehired a known sexual predator and you felt it was sufficient to simply direct him to steer clear of children. If confirmed, you will be responsible with overseeing the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, charged with ensuring equal access to education through vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws.

I am so concerned about whether sexual assault survivors on campus can trust you to support them.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you, Senator. They certainly can trust me to support them. I have a granddaughter that is now in college. I have two grandsons who are in college.

I have a deep commitment of understanding of how I would feel if any of them were involved in sexual harassment or accused of sexual harassment.

You have my absolute commitment that I will uphold and protect those investigations to make sure that those students are treated fairly on both sides.

Senator BALDWIN. Mrs. McMahon, we met shortly after a shooting at—

The CHAIR. You are a minute over.

Senator BALDWIN. Oh, I will submit this question for the record. Thank you.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIR. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman. Ms. McMahon, thank you for being here today and thanks for wanting to take on this monumental task.

I am a football coach. I am not a lawyer. I am not a business guy. I taught high school and worked my way up for 40 years. This country gives you one thing and is what I taught my kids when I coached country.

This country doesn't owe you anything but an opportunity, and that is the reason this country is the greatest country on the face of the earth. Now, when you lose that opportunity, and you—I have lost many times. I have got my tail back up and gone again.

But that is where you learn it, through education. I have been to every state in this country recruiting, going through high schools, except for Alaska, in my 40 years. In my 40 years of coaching and going into a high school, there has not been a bigger disappointment than our education system.

I have seen it decline for 40 years. It has gotten worse. So you are going to have the task of trying to bring it back. It is going to be hard to do because you are going to be fought from every side. This is not Democrat, Republican, Black, White.

It is not—it is an American problem. I have spent tens of thousands of dollars of my budget when I coach and bringing kids in. After I test them, they couldn't read past sixth grade reading level, but they had 3.5 GPAs when they came to my university. We are failing. It is a disaster. If you can't read, you can't learn.

That is one of the first things that we got to get back to, is teaching our kids to read. We got a lot of teachers that don't teach reading like you and I learned. It is different. We have all this nonsensical teaching of what we call common core of math.

I still haven't figured that out. But thanks for wanting to take this on because there is a lot of obstacles that are going to be in your way. And so, don't be afraid to make changes. We have had

a K through 12 system for years. It is a failure. It is an absolute failure. Let's teach our kids.

That is the only chance they got to survive in this world, which is going to be very competitive. Now we have things that are getting in our way. And what is deterring our kids nowadays? That thing right there.

I had problems coaching with—enemy No. 1 when I told them, put that damn phone up. Don't bring it to my dressing room because I want you to listen and learn, not be on there, listening to music and read the nonsense you see on there.

You got a lot of obstacles. The one thing I think we need to do is just look at K through 12 and what do we do? How do we get better? I am all for workforce development in the last 2 years of high school, teaching kids to learn to use their hands.

What is your thoughts on that, about work in high school? I am not talking about the past. I am talking about the last couple of years.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, thank you, Senator. I think when you and I met in your office, and I appreciated that time, I discussed with you that I probably dated myself by saying that when I was in high school, in your senior year in high school you could take vocational—a vocational program, which meant that you went to school the first part of the day.

The second part of the day you could have a job. You could be learning a skill or a trade, and those credits would count toward your education. I think we need to get back to more of that. We are not teaching skill based learning in our schools anymore.

I think we have to look at our entire education system and say, 4 year college is not for everyone. For those particular jobs that require it, your doctors, lawyers, engineers that require 4 years, then I think—

[Background demonstrators.]

The CHAIR. Ms. McMahan, please suspend.

[Background demonstrators.]

The CHAIR. The Committee will come to order. Capitol Police are asked to remove the individual from the room.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I don't think she knows how to read.

The CHAIR. Again, members of the audience are reminded that disruptions will not be permitted while the Committee conducts its business. And with that, Ms. McMahan, please resume.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you. So I think we do have to get back to teaching basics in school K through 12. But to continue onto what we were talking about, but we don't have enough skill based learning.

We don't have enough internships or apprenticeship programs. I would also like to see more dual credits in our high schools, our junior and senior years, that would count toward community colleges, or other or other institutes that would get students through college faster if in fact that is the plan that they are going to take.

We have so much that we can do to help our students get prepared to have a good income and a good livelihood. And if they can

graduate from high school with some skill based already, they can even start a business of their own.

They can decide at that particular point, I want to put more money toward my own education, but in the meantime I am prepared to make a living. But I think we have to look at education and say, our vocational and skill based training is not a default education.

It can be something. It can be front and center so that students who are inclined to go in that direction actually should be encouraged to do that. It is not one size fits all.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I would hope too that you would look—my time is almost up but look at the number of teachers we have now as compared to administrators. We need teachers.

We don't need people sitting in the office with their feet propped up. We need people in the classrooms teaching these kids, hold them accountable. And put more money in the teachers and less money in administrators. I think we would be a heck of a lot better off. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you.

The CHAIR. I will note for the record that many of the losses Coach Tuberville suffered were at the hands of LSU.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIR. Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Ms. McMahan, good to see you. You and I have spent a lot of time over the years, and I appreciate your willingness to sit before the Committee and answer some really important questions.

I want to talk to you about an Executive Order that the Trump administration issued that commands agencies, including the Department of Education, to eliminate grants to organizations and entities that support DEI programs and activities.

As you know, this has a lot of schools all across the country scrambling because they have no idea what that means. They don't know, because the order doesn't define DEI, as to whether they are in compliance or out of compliance, and whether they are going to have their Federal grants compromised.

How does the school know whether it is running a DEI program or not?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly—and thank you, Senator. And it is good to see you again outside of the State of Connecticut where we run into each other. DEI I think has been—it is a program that is tough.

It was put in place ostensibly for more diversity, for equity, and inclusion, and I think what we are seeing is that it is having an opposite effect. We are getting back to more segregating of our schools instead of having more inclusion in our schools.

When there are DEI programs that say that Black students need separate graduation ceremonies, or Hispanics need separate ceremonies, we are not achieving what we wanted to achieve with inclusion.

Senator MURPHY. Let me give you an example then. So this order applies to Department of Defense schools, and those schools have canceled all programing around Black History Month.

If a school in Connecticut celebrates Martin Luther King Day and has a series of events and programing teaching about Black history, are they in violation of a policy that says schools should stop running DEI programs?

Ms. MCMAHON. Not in my view. That is clearly not the case. The celebration of Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month should be celebrated throughout all of our schools. I believe that Martin Luther King was one of the strongest proponents of making sure that we look at all of our populations.

When he said that he would hope that his children wouldn't be judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character, and I think that is the fundamental basis that we should celebrate Black History Month.

Senator MURPHY. West Point has closed down all ethnic clubs, so the Society of Black Engineers no longer can meet because they believe that to be in compliance with this order, they cannot have groups structured around ethnic or racial affiliations.

Would schools—would public schools be in violation of this order—would they risk funding if they had clubs that students could belong to based on their racial or ethnic identity?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I certainly today don't want to address hypothetical situations. I would like, once I am confirmed, to get in and assess these programs, look at what has been covered—

Senator MURPHY. Is that a pretty easy one? I mean, you are saying that it is a possibility that if a school has a club for Vietnamese American students or Black students where they meet after school, that they could be potentially in jeopardy of receiving Federal funding?

Ms. MCMAHON. Again, I would like to fully understand what that order is and what those clubs are doing.

Senator MURPHY. That is pretty chilling. I think schools all around the country are going to hear that. What about educational programing centered around specific ethnic and racial experiences?

My son is in a public school. He takes a class called African American History. If you are running an African American history class, could you perhaps be in violation of this court order—of this Executive Order?

Ms. MCMAHON. I am not quite certain, and I would like to look into it further and get back to you on that.

Senator MURPHY. There is a possibility—there is a possibility, you are saying, that public schools that run African American history classes, right—this is a class that has been taught in public schools for decades, could lose Federal funding if they continue to teach African-American history.

Ms. MCMAHON. No, that is not what I am saying. I am saying that I would like to take a look at these programs and fully understand the breadth of the Executive Order and get back to you on that.

Senator MURPHY. I think you are going to have a lot of educators and a lot of principals and administrators scrambling right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My time has expired.

The CHAIR. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Ms. McMahon.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Good to have a conversation with you. You have had the privilege, I know, to come to Alaska during your tenure at the SBA. You came North, so I know that you have had an opportunity to understand some of the challenges that we face with basically our geography.

I wanted to talk a little bit this morning about our public schools. There is a lot of discussion, and I listened carefully to your comments to Senator Husted about school choice. We would all love to have the benefits of greater school choice.

In the Anchorage public school system, my sons were able to attend a magnet school that was focused on an immersion program for—Spanish speaking immersion program. It was a great program for them. I go to the vast majority of my communities across the state and there is no choice. It is a small village. It may have 500 people, it may have 1,000 people, but you have one school.

It is not as if there is an opportunity to go to another school because 82 percent of these communities are not connected by a road. So if you wanted to go to another school, you would have to figure out how you fly to another village, another population center.

For me, investment in our public education system is really what I have been focused on. I had an opportunity to speak before our Alaska Association of School Boards just recently and received a standing ovation when I said public funds for public schools. Pretty simple.

I want to ask you whether you believe it is your primary role and responsibility as Secretary to support and strengthen our Nation's public schools?

Ms. MCMAHON. I absolutely do believe that our public schools are the bedrock of our education. They go back to the very founding of our Country. I think in the first Constitution, there were actually Secretaries of each state that were set aside for the specific goal of public education.

Education is certainly understood to be so vital and so important to what we are doing. I understand the schools in Alaska—I think when I was in your office, we were talking about the school that I visited in Kwethluk, which is a very, very small island.

The school was being funded by SBA, this was when I was at SBA, and because we were looking at the fact that there was no real community center and no glue holding the community together. And the children, especially in K through 12, often dropped out of school because they didn't see the need or the necessity to continue with education and they would often wind up on the streets or not having jobs.

I have not checked back with that school to see how it was going, but I saw the commitment of that community to invest and to make sure that the best education—and this was a state of the art school built on this island.

When I pulled up in the boat in that village, there were mothers in a smoking hut that were cutting salmon to get ready for the winter. And on the other side, there was this incredibly modern school that was being built.

I think we have to invest our public education, if we can use public funds, to help with tutoring in those issues, in those instances where you don't have a choice to go to another school.

Senator MURKOWSKI. You quite possibly saw one of the very few examples of good infrastructure. And as we know, it is not just giving a good building. It is making sure that you have teachers that are able to stay in a village that lacks a lot of resources, a lot of support.

I want to pivot from that, but I do want to underscore the emphasis on education equity across America including in the most rural of areas. Because I listen to a lot of the comments around here, and it works if you are in a city, but it doesn't work in my communities, and I have an obligation to them.

I want to ask you about local control here real quickly. This has been something that as Republicans we have been talking about, this is—it is local control, local control, local control. And we have got a lot of folks that are suggesting that now the public school curriculum should not include lessons in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Want to focus on other things. I understand that. But we have ESSA, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We included a number of provisions that were very, very specific in prohibiting any Federal employee from mandating, directing, or controlling a state's school districts or school's instructional content, academic standards, and assessments, curricula, or program of instruction.

You may be in a situation where, as Secretary, you may not condition the award of a grant on a school agreeing not to teach DEI subjects. You may be in a position where you can't mandate that they teach the principles of the U.S. Constitution.

You may be in a position where you are not able to prohibit teachers from discussing LGBTQ issues with students. ESSA is very clear. And again, it was something that we wanted to promote as Republicans with the focus on local control.

How do you balance what you have shared here before the Committee with the requirements of the law that says the Federal Government is not the school board here, if you will, for our Nation's schools?

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you, Senator. And I believe—I don't remember which is the Senators this morning. Actually, I think it was Senator—[technical problems]—who said the Department of Education does not actually educate any child. It is to be handled at the local level.

I understand under ESSA there were lots of regulations put in place to return, and the goal was to return education to the states,

which is clearly the President's role. But, Senator, I must say we have failed in our mission.

We are not delivering the kind of education that we need to deliver to our children. I believe, as does the President, the best education is closest to the child. That parents and school officials who understand the needs of those children in those communities can best direct the education of those states, and states will be competitive.

Governors have put in programs for school choice, etcetera, and looking—and what kind of results are we seeing? I was heartened by the State of Louisiana in the recent NAEP scores that came out that they had brought up their reading and their math scores by a considerable percentage because they went back to basics.

They were teaching children to read and write and do arithmetic. And I think I heard a superintendent of the Louisiana schools say that he would—he used everything from flashcards to AI to make sure that the students were getting the basics in education, and that is what we have to get back to.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Sounds like you are suggesting we need to amend or change ESSA. Okay.

The CHAIR. Senator Murkowski, I was asleep at the wheel.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Go ahead.

The CHAIR. You are like way over.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I am sorry.

The CHAIR. Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine. I would never describe you as asleep at the wheel, Mr. Chairman. But thank you, Ms. McMahon. I enjoyed the visit we had in our office, especially our discussion about career and technical education.

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes.

Senator Kaine. That is a huge passion of mine. I want to ask you about public service loan forgiveness. The Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program was put in place during the Bush administration. Bipartisan Congress. It has been part of law since 2007. But what is your position on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly, and thank you very much. And it was good to visit with you in your office, Senator. Clearly, there are programs that have already been passed by Congress that do, in fact, grant loan forgiveness for public service.

Our first responders, military, etcetera, and we certainly should honor those programs. And if we want stronger or more programs for loan forgiveness, then I think Congress should pass those programs and then we would implement it.

Senator Kaine. Your commitment is, should you be confirmed, you will fully implement existing public service loan forgiveness programs that have been passed by Congress?

Ms. MCMAHON. Those that have been passed by Congress, yes. That is the law.

Senator Kaine. That is very important because during the first Trump administration, Secretary DeVos and the Department of

Education slow walked approvals of public service loan forgiveness. 7,000 people over the course of 4 years were granted forgiveness under the programs.

It was about a 3 percent acceptance rate of fully qualified applicants for public service loan forgiveness. During the Biden administration, more than a million applicants were approved for forgiveness, as was appropriate given the Congressional directive, and more than 33,000 Virginia public servants were given public service loan forgiveness.

If the DOGE brothers or somebody else tells you we don't like these programs and we don't want you to implement them, I can count on you to stand up and fully implement them to benefit those who are entitled to the benefit by the Congressional statute?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, because that is the law.

Senator KAINE. Thank you for that. If there is no Department of Education, who will enforce the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I think that is something that I would very much like to understand more and look into.

I mean, when IDEA was originally set up, it was under HEW, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. After the Department of Education was established in 1980, it shifted over there. I am not sure that it is not better served in HHS. But I don't know. I haven't yet been able to be in.

If I am confirmed, it is of high priority to make sure that the students who are receiving disability loans—I mean, disability funding, that is not impacted. It is incredibly important that those programs continue to be funded.

Senator KAINE. My Virginia parents who have children with disabilities are highly, highly worried right now about the elimination of the Department of Education because the IDEA is about funding, and I know you have talked about that already, but it is also about enforcement. You would agree with me that there has to be vigorous enforcement of the requirements of IDEA?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I certainly agree that we want to make sure that funding gets to those students, and it is not defunding—

Senator KAINE. I am not asking about funding. I am asking about enforcement.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, yes. The programs have to have accountability. All of the programs do.

Senator KAINE. What role do you think the Federal Government should play in addressing the national teacher shortage?

Ms. MCMAHON. That is a really critical issue that we are not—we are not attracting and keeping our teachers. One thing I think we need to make sure of—and I am not sure it is a Federal Government policy because that really should be at the state level.

How are we educating and teaching our—and training our teachers? How are we making sure that they have the supplies that they need in their classrooms? We need to make sure that the funding is proper in the states so that they can support teachers.

Senator Kaine. Let me say a word about funding. Just in the first couple of weeks of the Trump administration, here is what they have done with respect to the teacher shortage. They have canceled grants going to jurisdictions, including jurisdictions in Virginia, on teacher training programs that have been designed to reduce teacher shortages.

There is also a national priority that I am sure you are familiar with, national board certification for teachers. It is kind of giving teachers the ability to sort of up their professional credentials, and often local governments, and occasionally the Federal Government, will give an incentive, a financial incentive for upping your credentials.

The Trump administration canceled the grant that goes to the organization that administers national teachers certification. I get it that the primary responsibility for dealing with teacher shortages is at the state and local level, but the Federal Government has played an important role in this, and there are important ongoing initiatives to help states deal with it that this Administration is canceling, suggesting that they don't really prioritize having highly qualified teachers standing up in front of every classroom.

My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair. Thank you.

Senator Hawley.

Senator Hawley. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. McMahon, thank you for being here. Nice to see you again. Let me just say this, the last 4 years have been in many ways absolutely hellacious for students on our college campuses.

You had the last Administration, which issued Federal rules, binding regulations that required our college campuses to put biological men into women's locker rooms. You had multiple universities claiming the mandate, claiming the cover of the Biden administration forcing women to accept biological men in women's sports.

You have seen young woman after young woman denied basic safety in their changing facilities, for heaven's sake, basic safety in their dorm rooms, not able to play college sports.

I am delighted that a Federal court finally struck down this Biden administration rule back in January, just over a month ago, and President Trump issued a clear, strong, unequivocal Executive Order saying that Title IX will be enforced according to its terms, which is Title IX protects women's sports. It protects women on college campuses.

No more men in women's locker rooms. This is a huge victory for common sense and the rule of law. My question to you is this, a number of universities, including some very prominent ones, ones that love to call themselves elite, have said they are not going to follow that Executive Order.

They are going to keep having men in women's locker rooms. They are going to try to get men in women's sports. What can be done to ensure that these colleges comply with the law and that women are safe on campus, and that women are able to play sports without men interfering?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly that—it is a—I agree with you that I was very happy to see that—those restrictions on Title IX vacated so that we are really back to what Title IX was originally established to do, and that was to protect sexual discrimination.

Women should feel safe in their locker rooms. They should feel safe in their spaces. They shouldn't have to be exposed to men undressing in front of them. I think I heard one person the other day say, well, the guy should hold the shower curtain in front of them so that they aren't exposing themselves.

I mean, really, that is just not what we should be doing. We want to make sure that Title IX, which is the law, is enforced, and we need to uphold that.

Senator HAWLEY. Will you investigate those universities that are not complying with Title IX, that are not complying with the President's Executive Order—these universities are absolutely getting Federal funds from this Department, the Department that you are going to run, if and when you are confirmed, and I believe you will be.

Will you investigate those universities and give them an ultimatum? Either they need to comply with the law, they need to follow the law of Title IX, they need to follow the rules issued by this Administration and your Department or no Federal funding. I mean, will you make sure that this—that the law is enforced?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, we will make sure the laws is enforced.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Let me ask you about—

[Background demonstrators.]

The CHAIR. The Senator will suspend. The Committee will come to order. Capitol Police are asked to remove the individual from the hearing room. Members of the audience are reminded that disruptions will not be permitted while the Committee conducts its business. The Senator will resume.

Senator HAWLEY. Don't worry, Ms. McMahon. It is me, it is not you, as a matter of fact.

[Laughter.]

Senator HAWLEY. Let me ask you about something else that has happened on our campuses in the last 4 years, the wave of anti-semitism that we have seen, particularly after October 7th with the attacks on Israel. Shameful attacks on Jewish students, Jewish American students, Jewish students from overseas.

We have seen the most unbelievable pro-terrorist propaganda. And again, these universities taking Federal money, getting Federal funds, not protecting Jewish students, permitting encampments, permitting violence, in some instances attacks on students on their campuses.

The President has issued an Executive Order on January the 29th on measures to combat anti-Semitism, and he directed the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights to open Title VI investigations into a number of universities, including Columbia, Berkeley, Northwestern.

Will you enforce the law, Title VI to the hilt, and will you make sure that Jewish Americans are safe on our campuses, for heaven's

sake, and these crazy students who are committing crimes, breaking windows, smashing into buildings, trapping Jewish students in libraries, will you make sure that this stops on our college campuses that are getting all of this Federal tax money?

Ms. MCMAHON. Absolutely, or face defunding of their moneys.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. And let me ask you about something else. For students who have come to this country on a student visa—and as you know, that is a lot of people on our college campuses.

For students who are here on a student visa who have threatened their fellow students, threatened Jewish students, who have supported terrorist organizations, who have broken our law by trespassing, or vandalism, or acts of violence against Jewish students, will you see that those students, that their visas are revoked, and they are sent home, and they are not allowed to stay on our campuses under cover of our laws committing crimes and threatening our own students? Will you return some common sense to our campuses in this way?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes.

[Background demonstrators.]

The CHAIR. Capitol Police are asked to remove the individual from the hearing room. I am not sure it is going to matter, but I am going to remind members of the audience that disruptions are not to be permitted while the Committee conducts its business.

Please show people the regard you would have them show yourself if you are in this role. It may seem trite, but the rudeness of people who are trying to squelch others as they are trying to communicate in an incredibly public form is just amazing—amazingly bad.

With that editorial comment, I then go to Senator Hassan.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome, Ms. McMahan. It was good to meet with you in my office a little bit ago. And I have been starting these hearings with a question I never thought I would have to ask.

I will cut to the chase with you because you have said several times that you will uphold the law. So I assume that if the President of the United States gives you a directive that breaks the law, you will instead do what you are legally required to do rather than his instruction.

Ms. MCMAHON. The President will not ask me to do anything that is against the law.

Senator HASSAN. Well, the last month has told us that it is quite likely he may, but I am going to take you at your word that you will enforce the law because you have said it several times today.

Three weeks ago, the President unilaterally cut all Federal grants by issuing an indefinite freeze. That is an unconstitutional and, yes, illegal action that was stopped by Federal courts, to my previous point.

Subsequent reporting indicates that the President is also planning to eliminate the Department of Education, the Education—the Department that you are interviewing today to lead. And there is

this little bit of—I don't know, the whole hearing right now feels kind of surreal to me.

It is almost like we are being subjected to a very elegant gaslighting here because Senator Hawley just asked you and you talked about the need to enforce protections for Jewish students on college campuses, but the very Department where the enforcement would take place is the Department of Education and he wants to eliminate it, and you say you will work with him to do that.

Similarly, you have talked about the importance of apprenticeships and other kinds of career and technical education. Really important. There is bipartisan support for that here. The Republicans are in charge. We have bipartisan bill after bipartisan bill. We could go right forward with it, but there is this discussion as if we haven't made any progress on that and there is somehow a partizan divide about that.

I would encourage you to look into that. But I want to talk a little bit about why the Department of Education is so important. It plays a critical role in making sure that students, regardless of their zip code, race, gender, disability, or family circumstance have access to a quality public education.

It was established because Congress recognized that the country has a compelling interest in ensuring that all of our kids become self-sufficient members of our workforce and our civil society. New Hampshire schools rely on Federal funding of about \$2,000 per student to provide that public education.

What would you say to parents in my state who are concerned about the President's attempt to cut all Federal funding to New Hampshire and to eliminate the Department of Education? Are you telling parents that their children should lose access to special education services, for example, or lose access to trained teachers or school nurses?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, thank you, Senator, very much. Let me just object to one point, and that is that the residents in the State of New Hampshire should not be concerned that Federal funding is going to be removed from their schools. How they get that Federal funding may change—

Senator HASSAN. My time is limited. What Department do you suggest would then administer that funding?

Ms. MCMAHON. Which funding?

Senator HASSAN. The special education funding.

Ms. MCMAHON. Special education, I think it could very well go back to HHS where it started.

Senator HASSAN. All right. So I just want to be clear. You are going to put special education in the hands of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Now, I want to talk about IDEA a little bit more. I want to turn to a specific issue regarding the President's plan to eliminate the Department of Education. What does the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act promise?

Ms. MCMAHON. It promises that we are going to take care of these students, and they are going to be provided with assistance that they have in the school rooms, the technology that they need,

the assistance. And you and I talked a little bit about that with your own child.

Senator HASSAN. IDEA guarantees children with disabilities a free, appropriate education. What is the Federal investment promise to states under IDEA? What is it supposed to be?

Ms. MCMAHON. In terms of dollar amounts?

Senator HASSAN. Yes.

Ms. MCMAHON. I am not sure.

Senator HASSAN. The Federal Government committed back in 1975 when it passed IDEA to pay 40 percent of the average per pupil expenditure for special education. What we actually—what the Federal Government actually does?

Ms. MCMAHON. I think it is around 14 to 18 percent at this point.

Senator HASSAN. It is about 15 percent.

Ms. MCMAHON. But it is an appropriated amount from Congress, though. And so Congress needs to appropriate those dollars to spend.

Senator HASSAN. That is right. But the President of the United States is proposing, and the Republicans in Congress are proposing massive tax cuts for billionaires, and they are trying to pay for it by massive cuts to education and other services.

Just so you know, New Hampshire would lose \$60 million in IDEA funding if IDEA were eliminated. I am going to—my time is almost up. I am just going to say this. The reason the Department of Education came about in about 1975—IDEA was passed in 1975.

In 1979, was the Department—and Mr. Chair, I will take just a second here. But people need to understand, people like my son, we talked about him, before IDEA, before the Department of Education existed, state and local schools did not educate these kids. They barred them from the classrooms.

These kids were institutionalized and abused. There is a reason that a Department of Education and IDEA exist, and it is because educating kids with disabilities can be really hard, and it takes the national commitment to get it done.

That is why so many people are so concerned about this proposal to eliminate the Department because they think kids will once again be shoved aside, and especially kids with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, sir. One of the things that you and I had the opportunity to talk about a number of months ago, I actually believe that competition does in fact increase the production as well as improve the outcome, typically.

Whether it is private sector or with public education, I think competition is a key component to making things better and typically cheaper. I think charter schools is a classic example of that.

Typically speaking, some of the most successful schools in the country—think about success academies in New York City, where

you have 83 percent minorities who are consistently ranked in the top five high schools in the state because all kids have high potential of learning. I think that we need to make sure that every parent has choice so that the kids have the best chance at life.

By the way, I think that public schools are part of school choice from my perspective. Public schools, private schools, charter schools, virtual schools, homeschool. I want the parents to make that choice because they care the most about their kids.

I know some people think it is the teachers unions. I think it is the parents. I would love to hear your thoughts.

Ms. MCMAHON. I am sorry.

Senator SCOTT. I would love to hear your thoughts.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, absolutely. I agree that competition is, I think, very key. When I first was—started to take a look at education, I was reading the Sunday morning paper in Greenwich, Connecticut and I saw that public schools in Greenwich, Connecticut were not meeting the levels of No Child Left Behind, and I couldn't understand that. One of the richest communities in the country. How could there be this kind of achievement gap between students from lower income areas to upper income areas?

I tried to meet with the superintendent to talk about that article. I couldn't meet with her. I eventually talked to the Governor. And the Governor said to me, if you are really interested, let me introduce you to some people.

She did. And I started talking to the folks who were developing charter schools in Connecticut. A woman named Daisha Tall. And I visited those schools, and I saw how much better those children were performing.

They were rapidly coming up to grade level reading and doing math. They were teaching differently. And I thought, this is a real opportunity. This is a charter school, which is a public school.

Senator SCOTT. Yes.

Ms. MCMAHON. In the State of Connecticut, it is not fully funded. The facility is not provided. And so you—it is a public, private partnership to make sure that these schools are offering choice and competitiveness.

We saw quite—it was clear evidence how those schools provided an opportunity for students to succeed.

Senator SCOTT. Awesome. I only have 2 minutes left. That was quick. Maybe I have as much time as I want. I will be the Chair for a few—

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. That's great. Oh my goodness gracious. Never mind. I didn't see that hammer you had there. So back in 2017, I started working on creating a definition in higher education for anti-Semitism.

I thought then that we were seeing a little uptick. And having been raised in the Deep South, I am familiar with discrimination and the challenges that come with, unfortunately, the color of people's skin and, or their religious beliefs.

If you look at the level of hate that we have seen recently on college campuses toward our Jewish students, I find it disgusting, frankly. I hope that you will commit to investigating reports of anti-Semitism to the full extent of the law, especially on college campuses around this country.

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, absolutely. There should be no discrimination of any form. But I fully believe that there should be First Amendment protections for discourse and for freedom of speech.

But when you become involved in activities that are actually endangering the students that are on campus, then that is not what should happen. And those schools that accept Federal funding that allow that to happen should face defunding.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. And my last question. I know that many of us on my side of the aisle think that DEI is about power more than it is about anything else. I think diversity actually is very healthy for our Country.

It is the backbone and the strength of our Country. I think diversity, equity, inclusion is a political movement that has very little to do with the advancement of people based on the merit, based on what they have to offer, and more to do with about gaining power and political position.

President Trump and I worked a lot on HBCUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He was able to take that funding to the highest level in the history of the country. He was the first President and the only President to make that funding permanent.

There is no doubt that our Country still struggles with the issue of race, but one of the shining examples of a merit based system that helps those who do not have, see the perspective that the American dream is for them.

I hope that you will commit to continuing the efforts of President Trump on supporting Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes. As a matter of fact, I met with the president of Howard University a week ago and we sat and talked through a lot of the different programs that are offered there. And I was very impressed.

I understand that I believe that I am an honorary Board of Regent member, that may not be the right description, by virtue of if I am confirmed as the Secretary of Education, and I look forward to continuing those programs.

Senator SCOTT. With my last 5 minutes.

[Laughter.]

Senator MARSHALL. Make it fast.

Senator SCOTT. Okay, I am done.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you, Senator Scott. I see Senator Hickenlooper jumped in front of the freshman.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. No, I will yield to the freshman. Just out of deference to her fresh status.

Senator MARSHALL. Okay.

Senator Blunt Rochester, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair and Mr. Hickenlooper for that sharing of the time.

I will first start out by acknowledging that today here with us are representatives from the Delaware State Education Association, and I want to thank them and all of their members for being here in Washington, but more importantly, for what they do for the students and families in the State of Delaware.

I also want to thank you, Ms. McMahon, for taking the time to come and meet with me and talk about a myriad of issues. I especially appreciated your candor in our meeting. And as I am sitting here watching the passion of the participants, of the Members, it is clear that education is so important to this country.

I am clear eyed about the challenges that we face in accomplishing the goal of ensuring that all students are able to be prioritized. I shared my concerns about the call to abolish the Department. I am particularly concerned as a former Cabinet Secretary myself, Cabinet Secretaries do have the influence, the power, the responsibility to share what is good, what is bad, what is wrong.

I understand waiting until you get into a position to figure some things out, but there are core basic things like do we have—the confusion that people have over this Executive Order on diversity. They are scared. The fact that school kids are afraid to come to school maybe because of their status.

We are hearing all kinds of stories and that is why this hearing is so important. That is why this position is so important. And I am just a little confused because part of the reason why it was created was because in HEW, children were buried into these big departments.

Why do you think that a Department that is focused and that really is dealing with children, whether it is civil rights, disability, the providing the checks and balances, why do you think that it is better to stick the functions of dealing with children with disabilities in a huge department that will not have the same priority?

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you very much, Senator, for that question. The bottom line is, because it is not working. The Department of Education was set up in 1980, and since that time, we have spent almost \$1 trillion, and we have watched our performance scores continue to go down.

I do believe that it is the responsibility to make sure that our children do have equal access to excellent education. I think that is best handled at the state level, closest to the states, working with state administrators, teachers, parents who should have input into their curriculum.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I have only 2 minutes. And I just want to follow-up, do you believe that any school benefiting from taxpayer dollars should be required to follow Federal civil rights laws?

Ms. MCMAHON. Schools should be required to follow the laws.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Anybody getting Federal—getting taxpayer dollars. And so, that is good. So private schools should not

be able to turn away a student with a disability or a student based on their religion or their ethnicity or race.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, private schools have—private schools aren't taking Federal dollars.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. But I am saying—

Ms. MCMAHON. They have the ability to say that they—if they do not believe that they—

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. If they receive then, they should not.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, if they believe that they cannot best serve that student and they are not taking Federal dollars, then they have the right not to accept that student.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. But I am speaking specifically when we talk about—there is a lot of conversation about vouchers. If private schools take Federal dollars, can they turn away a child based on a disability, or religion, or race?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I think that there are also some public schools who are saying that they don't have the—

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. It is really just a yes or no.

Ms. MCMAHON. No it is not. It really is—

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. For me—if you want to follow-up, because I am kind of running out of time.

Ms. MCMAHON. Okay. I would be happy to follow—and I look forward to following up with you to discuss that. Thank you very much.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Okay. Because this is a big—one of the big concerns that we hear about. Also, I believe that as a country, as I said, we have benefited from checks and balances. It is a hallmark.

If you are concerned, how would you defend the rights of all students if state and local governments are unable or won't address violations of students' civil rights? For example, how will you intervene if a student is being bullied or harassed on the basis of race or disability?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly civil rights are the rights of everyone. And so, we want to make sure that our schools are enforcing—bullying shouldn't happen anywhere. No child should be made to feel uncomfortable. So it is—but the Department of Education does not control that from Washington.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. But would you put this in the Department—when we talked, you mentioned the Department of Justice. Would you move this to the Department of Justice?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, one of the things that we talked about, as I said this morning, that I think there may be more appropriate places that maybe the Department—OCR that is currently in the Department of Education is better served in the Department of Justice where they have civil rights attorneys as well.

But I don't know those things yet. If I am confirmed, I look forward to getting in and really digesting and understanding where all of these particular aspects need to fit to best serve our students. That is the goal, is to protect our students.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I look forward to following up. You can understand there is a lot of distrust based on people's motivations in just the past few weeks. I think that is why you are seeing all of what you have seen in this audience today in terms of participation of the folks here.

This is important. Our students are important, as you know. And so, I really hope that this Administration and that you will recognize that there are students, there are teachers, there are parents that need the support and the help. And we hope that you will continue as well with your support of HBCUs.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you, Senator.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I yield back. Thank you so much, Senator Marshall.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you so much. Good morning, Ms. McMahan. Good to see you.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you. Good to see you too.

Senator MARSHALL. You bet. Ms. McMahan, when I speak to youth, I typically talk about the three pillars of my life, faith, family, and education. And thanks to a strong faith, a loving family, and the public educators in my life, I was a first generation college kid who got to live my American dream and become a physician and practice in rural medicine.

This education thing is so important to all of us on both sides of the dais. I raised four kids in public schools. And unfortunately, I have seen the deterioration of the education system. And again, we have the most incredible teachers and coaches back home, and I am grateful for all of them, but I think we would all agree we are going the wrong direction.

Just really big picture, what would be your top priorities? How do we move—how do we change the ship's direction?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly the President has given a very clear directive that he would like to look in totality at the Department of Education and believes that the bureaucracy of it should be closed. That we should return education to our states. That the best education is that closest to the kids.

That we should work with our local schools, with our superintendents, with our parents to make sure that the education that our students are getting are the ones that is best for them. It is not one size fits all education policy throughout the country. Governors have taken great strides in putting in schools—implementing school choice, making sure that schools have the funding that they need.

We have seen public education in those states actually improve. There have been studies to show that. And so, I am very hopeful that we will get back to the basics of education so that our children can read when they leave third grade, and that eighth grade students can do math and reading proficiency.

Today, one-third, only one-third of high school students graduating can read proficiently. That means two-thirds can't. We are failing our students—our Department of Education. And what we are doing today is not working and we need to change it.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you. Ms. McMahon, should boys, biological boys be allowed to compete against girls in sports?

Ms. MCMAHON. I do not believe that biological boys should be able to compete against girls in sports. And I think now that they certainly not only have the people spoken, because that was something that President Trump ran very hard on, but also the court has spoken.

Senator MARSHALL. Ms. McMahon, I feel like there is a—that anti-Semitism has become endemic in our universities. Would you be open to some type of an anti-Semitism commission to evaluate the progress of the universities on this issue?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, I would. And I would look forward to perhaps working with you or other Members of the Committee on such a commission.

Senator MARSHALL. Okay. Let's talk about workforce Pell Grants for a second. We can't keep doing what we are doing. The average starting salary for graduates from our community colleges and technical colleges back home is higher than our 4 year universities, and their debt is close to zero, if not zero as well. Would you speak to some more—what do you feel about more flexibility of Pell Grants?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I certainly would like to see workforce Pell Grants. And it goes through various stages of getting passed.

But I definitely think that workforce Pell Grants are something that could stimulate our economy, provide opportunity for those who are wanting to participate in skilled based learning to have the opportunity. If we have short term certificates of Pell Grants, that would get those students into the workplace faster, if they want to be electricians, HVAC developers, or—

Senator MARSHALL. Apprenticeships as well.

Ms. MCMAHON. Apprenticeships and internships, all of that. In fact, in the first Trump administration, I was part of—with SBA, working with the Department of Labor, of making sure that there were more apprenticeship programs across the country, because those are very, very vital to the growth of not only our economy but our businesses in general.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you, Ms. McMahon. I appreciate your answers and look forward to supporting you. Again, education is so important to all of us. To live that American dream, we need a strong education system. And I know you are committed to that as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

The CHAIR. Senator Hickenlooper.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Ms. McMahon, for your public service and for coming back and going through all this again.

I thought when you were talking to Senator Blunt Rochester that your comment that bullying shouldn't happen anywhere true—is absolutely true. It shouldn't happen in schools. It shouldn't happen in homes. It shouldn't happen in government.

I am not going to go over—I agree on the things so much—you have covered anti-Semitism and making sure that there is great

clarity around that. I want to talk a little bit about history and the teaching of history. I used to talk about topophilia, which means love of place.

I believe it is a basic building block of economic development, of people's affection for a place. And that affection comes largely through the teaching of the history of that part of your state or your county, however that gets broken down. But I think teaching every part of our history is important.

Colorado, some of the worst parts of our history, our Governor, Ralph Carr, a Republican Governor who was one of the few Western Governors who when we were putting large detention facilities together for Japanese Americans during World War—at the beginning of World War II, he said not only we are not going to support that, but any Japanese Americans who want to come, should come to live in Colorado and live freely.

We had the Sand Creek massacre where Colorado volunteers slaughtered almost 200 mostly women and children. But I think you mentioned in your testimony that the importance of teaching true history, and I understand the emphasis on positive, but I want to make sure that we agree on the teaching of all of it, both positive and negatives, just because as any—as an entrepreneur, you learn more from your mistakes than from—what you do right.

I think making sure that we don't gloss over the troubling parts of our history is—that we are not letting that slip behind us.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, clearly, I do agree that we should teach our history, the true history, the good, the bad, and the ugly, because we don't learn unless we recognize our mistakes.

I will say that the Department of Education does not establish curriculum, but that is something that is handled at the state level. But clearly, I am in favor of our history being taught exactly as it happened.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. All right. I appreciate that. And it is funny that a lot of people don't. So it is good to get that on the record. We talked a little bit about apprenticeships and the importance of apprenticeships.

I think the comment you made just that almost two-thirds of our kids when they graduate from high school cannot read proficiently is a disgrace that we should all not accept. And I think, as you recognize, it is not that we don't have good teachers. I think we have great teachers in every state.

It is a very powerful statistic that in almost every survey, parents think that the school systems are broken except theirs. They think their school is pretty good. And I think that is a reflection of the quality of teachers we have. But this notion that everybody should go to college, I think is prevalent and persistent.

You have talked about the importance of alternative career pathways. And when you were in the office, we discussed this. One of the major issues we hear on trying to push apprenticeships, not just to trades, not adult apprenticeships at 18, but 16, 17, 18 year olds while they are in high school, going and working a couple of days a week in an insurance company, could be a law firm, anywhere, but learning what a job place looks like, coming back to

school and learning things that might make them more successful there.

One of the problems is that type of an apprenticeship, so many of the academic advisers are just focused on that 4 year college track, and that is what the parents are kind of expecting. They may not even realize what apprenticeships are around there.

What can you do as Secretary of Education to share with high schools all across America that these other alternative pathways are available?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly I have been on record even when I ran for the Senate in the State of Connecticut—I ran twice and didn't win. But I always talked about how we needed skills in our Country.

That we did not have the trades that we need to have today. But I also talked about how parents, I think, are encouraging their children only to go to college and not necessarily recognizing that there are other avenues that those children could pursue.

I clearly was a parent who were pushing both my children to go to college, but I realize today that there are other opportunities for students to succeed and enter into a pathway that they will be successful in their lives.

I think apprenticeships, internships, working the public, private sector to make sure that we have our curriculum that is designed for the needs of the communities and business. I think that is incredibly important. That is one of the things that we have—was driven to do at Sacred Heart University that I sit on the Board of Education.

What are the needs of the community and how can that curriculum be structured to satisfy that need? And that is, I think, critically important.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Great. We are out of time. Of course, I have got millions more questions. Maybe we will continue that discussion. I appreciate you being open about not wanting to end the Department of Education completely and not—your willingness to look at Pell Grants on a larger scale. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Senator Banks.

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just as a side note, I am struck by the outburst of some of the protesters in the room, and a number of them have told us that they are teachers.

Can you imagine them teaching—these people teaching our kids in classrooms across America, and they come here and act like children with outburst and try to prevent us—in attempt to prevent us from doing our job to move you forward to do the important work that you have to do.

For me, that is what this is all about. I have three daughters who are in grade school in public schools, and I want to get politics out of the classroom. I want political flags and political statements and ideologies out of the classroom. I want teachers to teach our kids and prepare them for the jobs of the future.

I am very intrigued with what President Trump is talking about in dismantling the Federal Department of Education because I

have served in the State House and the Indiana State Constitution devotes a number of chapters to educating our kids.

The last time I checked, the Federal Constitution doesn't say a single thing about education because our founders, in their wisdom, recognized that is a role of the state. And Ms. McMahon, I know we have talked about this before, but this is about an attitude.

An attitude of empowering teachers and schools and moms and dads to give our kids the best chance that they can possibly have. And I know that you agree with this, but I want to ask anyway, can't the State of Indiana do a whole lot better of a job of spending dollars on education rather than bureaucrats in Washington, DC?

Ms. MCMAHON. I certainly believe that to be true, Senator, yes. And that is definitely what the President believes as well. That I will be repetitive, that education is best handled closest to the child, to understand what that child needs and what the community needs. And working with parents, parental rights are so important in educating our children, and I definitely believe that should be returned to the states.

Senator BANKS. Speaking of wasting money, the Biden Department of Education allocated over \$1 billion in grants toward diversity, equity and inclusion programs, and that included \$4 million toward a "culturally responsive computer science camp for high schoolers." \$1 million to train elementary teachers in Iowa on "equity centered education."

\$38,000 for a 1-day session with an "equity consultant" in Michigan. Countless dollars toward race based hiring, which is unconstitutional and unlawful, by the way. Will you commit to ending all racial discrimination in government programming at the Department of Education?

Ms. MCMAHON. That will be my goal, absolutely, to work—and I look forward to working with you and other Members of the Committee as well, and with Congress to make sure that we can take the ideology, if you will, out of education and focus on actually teaching our students to read and to write and to do arithmetic, because they cannot be successful if they cannot do the basics.

Senator BANKS. Some of my colleagues have talked about the rise of anti-Semitism on college campuses, and I think one of the motivators of that is money that flows from adversarial foreign countries like China and other countries with an anti-American agenda that are donated to many of our colleges and universities in the United States of America.

It turns out that the Department of Education plays a key role in reporting and making those foreign donations transparent. Well, I want to ban them altogether. China should never be donating money to colleges and universities in Indiana or anywhere else in the country.

Have you thought about what other steps that we can take to eliminate foreign influences, especially anti-American influences, on our college campuses?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I think what we have seen is the lack of transparency of where the money comes from, how much, and what

it is used for when it gets to colleges. And I think there absolutely has to be more transparency in tracking that money.

Senator BANKS. I hope that I saw what President Trump did in the first—in his first term and the 4-years of tightening many of the—these donations and blocking them, making them transparent.

Then I saw—I served on the Education Committee in the House for 8 years. So, 4 years of President Trump, 4 years of President Biden. There was no attention paid to this under President Biden. Chinese Communist Party dollars flowing to colleges, universities that are no longer reported, made transparent.

I hope that—I know that will be a big priority of yours because we talked about it and I want to do everything I can to help you block it, make it—the public should know that adversaries of the United States of America are giving money to the universities that they are sending their kids to.

Thank you very much for your leadership. You have my full support. I look forward to working with you. I yield back.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. Yesterday, President Trump said he would like the Department of Education to be closed immediately. He called the Department a big con job. Education funding helps us work toward a country where every student can go to their school knowing that they will get the same education as the family that can afford private school. Public school is not a con job.

It is equality for every student, regardless of income. It helps guarantee that every student, including the 26 million low income students, the 10 million rural, 5 million English language learners, 7 million disabled students, and 1 million homeless can go to public school knowing they have the same opportunity as every other student.

Trump's crusade to abolish the Department of Education and "root out waste and fraud and corruption"—for cuts to public schools is an attack on every public school student, parent, teacher, paraprofessional, administrator, and school worker in this country.

Waste, fraud, and corruption is code for cuts to public education for all of those students. So I have here the text of a bill I have been working on. The No Cuts to Public Schools Act.

This bill would guarantee that Federal funding to public schools could not be cut during the length of President Trump's administration. Ms. McMahan, can you commit today to not cutting funding for public schools in this country?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, certainly what I will commit to, sir, is that funding for schools is appropriated by Congress, and that funding should continue. Congress will continue to pass those laws. The Department of Education is not doing that.

Senator MARKEY. Will you oppose any cuts to public education, yes or no?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, the President is not—he is not saying that we should cut funding to public education.

Senator MARKEY. Yes, he is. Yes, he is.

Ms. MCMAHON. He is simply saying—well, I would disagree with you—

Senator MARKEY. Elon Musk yesterday announced he would immediately cut \$900 million from the Department of Education, and he stood right next to Trump and made that very clear.

The answer I am looking for, by the way, is a yes, I will fight to make sure that public funding is not cut because that announcement was just made, the \$900 million cut, and we know that is just a down payment to gut the education of every public school student in America.

By the way, to find the billions of dollars that are going to be needed for the tax cuts for billionaires and millionaires in our Country. They have to go to the Department of Education. They have to go to clean air and clean water. They have to go to Medicaid. They have to go to the Affordable Care Act.

They have to go for all—to all of the programs that they are calling waste, fraud, and corruption, but that is just another way of saying the programs that help the poor and the sick and the elderly, the disabled in our society. That is what we are talking about, because they want all of these programs gutted to find the funding for the tax breaks.

DOGE, as it is rumbling through the Department of Education right now, just stands for Department of Gutting Education. That is what they are doing. They are inside looking at it. \$900 billion is the down payment.

Ms. McMahan, can you commit today to fight so that not \$1 from public schools goes toward paying for tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, that was certainly a broad view of what is going on right now today. We are trying to find waste, fraud, and abuse. The DOGE groups that are in the Department of Education, from my understanding, have looked at competitive contracts that are bidding, and let's see where that money is going. How is it being spent? I am not there. If I may, Senator—

Senator MARKEY. What they are doing—

Ms. MCMAHON. If you ask me a question, I would really like the opportunity to answer.

Senator MARKEY. What they are doing is first, they announce the cuts. Then they go to find where it is. So it is all backward. And again, we know what the plot is.

Ultimately, the answer I am looking for is a yes because if even \$1 flows away from an educator or student toward a billionaire tax break, that will be immoral in our Country—immoral. These kids deserve the funding which they are receiving.

Donald Trump and Elon Musk should be ashamed that they are working harder for billionaires than they are for working families—for these kids who need help. 90 percent of disabled students go to public schools.

95 percent of students with disability go to public school. And Trump and Musk want to take from those students to give to billionaires. That is immoral. It is wrong. It is unjust. And we are

going to fight it every single step of the way. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Senator Markey.

Senator Moody.

Senator MOODY. Hello. It is so great to be with you. Thank you for joining us today. I would like for you to have some time to answer some questions. Wouldn't that be unique? I am wondering, one of my very first important questions is, is it harder to sit composed and calm and focused among a bunch of WWE wrestlers, or is it harder to sit in this hearing with people popping up and yelling at you all day?

Ms. MCMAHON. I can stay pretty composed and focused in either environment.

[Laughter.]

Senator MOODY. As you know, United States Department of Education provides more than \$120 billion in grants. And much of that flows through to our public university systems. And the Higher Education Act makes a condition for higher education to receive a single dollar of that money, that higher education institution has to be accredited.

Now, that is not by the Department of Education. They have delegated that to a private—private entities of persons that aren't accountable to voters, aren't accountable to the President, and they decide who is accredited—which institution actually is eligible to get all that money.

In Florida, we have had the experience that our post-secondary institutional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, also known as SACs, has decided that it will threaten that accreditation, meaning threaten our Federal funding, if we even suggest that maybe a former policy leader, lawmaker, conservative, might go into leadership at a university.

Or one of my dear friends, Senator Scott, former Governor Scott, had suggested that he was going to go on campus and speak about hazing. It seems pretty expected. As a parent, I would want that, and our accreditation was threatened. Even in North Carolina when they wanted to institute a policy focused on—or excuse me, a program focused on ideological diversity, their accreditation was threatened.

As Attorney General of Florida, I sued. I think there is a Constitutional problem with the Department of Education delegating that authority to a private organization who dictates whether someone can get Federal funding and tries to insert their own preferences and policies down into the education policies of a state and force it on our educational institutions. So I wanted to talk to you a little bit about that today.

I don't think it has just frustrated Florida. I think, yes, we were one of the first states to stand up and fight, and go to court, and try and stop that. But a lot of the themes that you are hearing, especially with some of the nominees, were trying to stop unelected bureaucrats or unelected people and these private organizations that have been either getting a lot of authority or a lot of Federal

money pushing policies into the states, and we don't think that's right. So I wanted to talk to you if—do you think that is right?

Ms. MCMAHON. No, I don't think that is right.

Senator MOODY. If you are confirmed, which I expect that you will be, and I hope that you are. I am very impressed—

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you.

Senator MOODY [continuing]. Not only with your—some of your educational participation in your own state, but your managerial experience. I think we need that right now. But will you commit to me that you will look into some of the regulations and guidance documents that relate to higher education institutions being able to change their accreditors?

Ms. MCMAHON. Yes, definitely. And I look forward to working with you on that. And there has been a lot of issues raised about these five to seven accreditors that are the ones that are deciding these fates today, and I think that needs to have a broad overview and review.

Senator MOODY. It may be that we have to look at the accreditation process. And as Congress, we might need to amend the Higher Education Act to make them more accountable. But I do believe, and we are still in litigation in Florida.

I say we—I am trying to change hats now as Senator Moody, but Florida still in litigation about this issue, because I do think it is a Constitutional problem for an agency to delegate that kind of authority over to a private organization.

I think a lot of that delegation is really where you are seeing states getting frustrated, people getting frustrated, because in these agencies and in these private organizations, you are seeing an ideological agenda, a policy driven agenda, and people that are willing to implement it, whether they have the authority or not, and I believe that is where you are seeing so much frustration and why you saw such an overwhelming expectation that this President change things.

I think you are going to help him do that, and I, for one, am looking forward to that. Thank you, Chairman.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Moody.

Now it is Senator Kim's turn.

Senator KIM. Yes, thank you, Chairman. Thank you for coming before us. I guess I just wanted to jump in. I have heard a couple of times you mentioned that you believe that Congress would need to be involved if there is an effort to abolish the Department of Education. That is right?

Ms. MCMAHON. Correct.

Senator KIM. Do you know if President Trump shares that sentiment?

Ms. MCMAHON. I have heard President Trump recently over the last couple of weeks—in conjunction with his fervor to shut down the bureaucracy of the Department of Education, he has also stated that he will work with Congress to make that happen.

Senator KIM. Do you know if Elon Musk has had any conversations with him about the Department of Education—him or his team?

Ms. MCMAHON. I have not.

Senator KIM. Why I raise this is that I just came from another hearing that was talking about foreign assistance, talking about USAID.

USAID is another element of our Federal Government that was codified by Congress, and we see an effort there to dismantle it. Not fully abolish it but dismantle it basically down to about 600 people. Gut everything.

Put it under the State Department. So I guess, I wanted to just ask you, if something like that was proposed by the Trump administration for the Department of Education, does that have to come to Congress?

Ms. MCMAHON. Certainly there are departments that I believe that are in the Department of Education by statute, and those have to be looked at.

Senator KIM. What elements of the Department of Education are those that are protected by statute?

Ms. MCMAHON. I believe IDEA is. I think Title I is. And I would like to discuss that—look into it and discuss it more fully with you.

Senator KIM. But for those that are not codified by statute, you are saying those are ones that the executive branch can do as they please?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, I think that I would like to look into that more.

Senator KIM. Why I kind of mentioned this as well is that just in the first couple of weeks here we had a lot of conversation about the surge of anti-Semitism, our strong support, and make sure we are protecting students from that type of harassment, from that type of intimidation.

Absolutely something we need to stand against in terms of anti-Semitism. But I guess I was alarmed because what we ended up seeing is there are multiple attorneys and other staff members of the Department's Office of Civil Rights that have been placed on administrative leave with no notice, no explanation.

Some of them were in the process of investigating cases directly related to anti-Semitic harassment. So I guess I wanted to just ask you, is that something you would support? Do you think that is the right actions that we should be taking at this time that we see such a surge in anti-Semitism?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, Senator Kim, I know that it is not a great comfort for me to say this morning that I am not yet confirmed, have not yet been in the Department. I don't know about all the administrative people that have been put on leave.

I want to look into that. I want to understand it. I want to assess the Department. I can't do that unless I am confirmed, and I get there. But I would certainly be willing to come back to you with a more specific answer.

Senator KIM. But does that concern you at all if—when you—if you were confirmed, would you make that a priority to go and see whether or not this is going to impact our ability to respond to the anti-Semitism?

Ms. MCMAHON. No, I would want to make sure that we have everything that we need to have in place to protect our students on campuses.

Senator KIM. One thing that we see in having this debate on here in Congress is about this, and what we have seen is that Republicans have called for a 25 percent cut in the budget of the Office of Civil Rights. Is that something you would support?

Ms. MCMAHON. I would—again, I would want to see exactly what that impact is going to be and understand it.

Senator KIM. Look, I guess I just, I am frustrated because I feel like this is such a clear place where we can just say, yes, we want to make sure we have as much resources as possible to be able to fight anti-Semitism, to make sure that we are addressing these needs. Such a surge—when we see a surge in anti-Semitism, of course, we would want a surge in resources to focus on that.

I just wanted to raise that because this whole debate that we are having right now, it feels like it is untethered from just the reality on the ground. And I just urge you, if you are confirmed, that we are understanding the human impact of the problems that are here. I have a second grader and a fourth grader. I have got two little boys. And I just had their parent-teacher conference.

Yes, we talked through the performance of my kids, the data that NAEP and others are using, the Institute for Education Science, and now we are seeing \$900 million cuts to that coming out from Elon Musk and his team. But I just raise this is—the reason why teachers are concerned right now.

It is not about their own salaries and their own careers. When they talk to me, they talk about the kids. They talk about the kids. That is like—I find that to be so powerful when these teachers, they are saying, look, like I am not asking about my own career.

I am asking about the kids. So just as you proceed, just remember that. Parents are very scared right now. And I yield.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Kim.

Senator Alsobrooks.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to just begin my remarks—hello. Thank you so much, Ms. McMahon, for being here today. And I would like to just begin to follow-up with what my colleague said and address what I regard as very disparaging comments, I would just like to say first, by one of my colleagues regarding the educators who have come here today.

In the same vein as Senator Kim, the educators who are here, my colleague referred to them as these people, and said, who would want to be taught by these people. The passionate educators who have come here today, not on behalf of themselves, they are here on behalf of our children, and I want to address how shameful it was to say who would want to be taught by them.

They are exactly the kind of people who we want teaching our children. The question I have for you today, I know your parents were civil servants and so you recognize the importance that they bring to their work, the care and concern that they bring to their work. And I have been very concerned regarding the treatment of many of our civil servants, those especially in the Department of Education.

You may know that last night a number of them were laid off with 15 minutes to have their computers turned off, access to it. Just treated really horribly. So the question I have for you, because one of my constituents on a town hall I hosted last night with 17,000 Marylanders, said that they are working in a culture of fear at the Department, and that civil servants at the Department don't know who will be fired next, have little guidance, and feel like they can't do their jobs—and they care very much about the work they are doing.

How will you address the culture of fear in an environment where civil servants, both Democrats and Republicans, who are working that are feeling undervalued and attacked by this Administration?

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, thank you very much for that question, Senator. And it is always difficult to downsize. It is always difficult to restructure and reorganize in any department. I have faced that in the business world, because you know what you do impact people's lives.

But at this particular point, I know that there are people that have been placed on administrative leave, which means they are still receiving full benefits and salary while their jobs are being looked at and how the Department is being evaluated overall.

I think people should always be treated with respect and with humility, and I would hope that is what is going on within the Department of Education. I am not there in person to see that yet, but it would certainly be something that I would strive to do in any reorganization that we would take.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. And I would also like to ask you, regarding the President's targeting of legally binding collective bargaining agreements. He has really targeted those. To ask you whether you will commit to abiding by the agreement in upholding civil service employment protections?

Ms. MCMAHON. I will certainly commit to working with you and to looking into those issues if I am confirmed to be the Secretary of Education.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Also to ask you whether you will commit to ensuring that Federal workers with disabilities—many of them are very concerned about whether they will continue to have reasonable accommodations as required by law.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, as required by law is the key phrase there. Yes.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. Well, in the same vein, there are some who are concerned about being forced now to reapply for accommodations.

These are people who have had those accommodations given to them and they are being told now that they must reapply for those accommodations with their supervisors. And so, will you commit that the Department's civil servants with disabilities will have their reasonable accommodations honored without interference or delay?

Ms. MCMAHON. I will certainly commit time there and if confirmed to look into all of those and to get back to you.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. And finally, I would like to ask you, regarding the freezing of funds, if you are confirmed, would you support any directive from the President to freeze funds that have been appropriated by Congress, including funds that students and families rely on to pay for college?

Ms. MCMAHON. If they have been appropriated by Congress, those funds should be disseminated.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. And so, you would block any directive—you would not adhere to any directive, including some of our HBCU's in my state, Bowie, Coppin State, Morgan State, you would not interfere with the freezing of those funds?

Ms. MCMAHON. I would commit to you that I will look into every single one of those programs so that I can get back to you and say, this is what I have found. This is what I have discovered. This is what—the action that is being taken against it or in—for it, because I want to be very inclusive with you on that regard.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. Final question. I just have 9 seconds here—Title I. I know that you said you support it. If the Department of Education is dismantled, what will you do to protect the students who rely, who are disadvantaged and impoverished, on Title I funds.

Ms. MCMAHON. Well, Title I funds are appropriated by Congress. They flow directly to the states today. They go to the State Department of Education and are deployed to the districts. So the Department of Education is not really involved in that distribution.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. Thank you so much.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Alsobrooks.

Senator Sanders.

Senator SANDERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record 18 letters opposing Ms. McMahon as Secretary of Education.

[The following information can be found on page 265 in Additional Material:]

The CHAIR. So ordered. I will now conclude but let me first say that the Capitol Police are requesting that the audience remain seated until Ms. McMahon leaves. So just to first say that.

Ms. McMahon, thank you very much for being here. You have handled yourself extremely well. I now ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record 55 letters of support for Ms. McMahon's nomination.

[The following information can be found on page 345 in Additional Material:]

The CHAIR. This concludes our hearing. For any Senators who wish to ask additional questions, questions for the record will be due tomorrow at 5.00 p.m.. Once more, audience, please stay seated until Ms. McMahan leaves. Thank you.

Ms. MCMAHON. Thank you very much.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

WILEY

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management

Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary and Middle School

Author(s): R. Joseph Waddington and Mark Berends

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**Impact of the Indiana
Choice Scholarship Program:
Achievement Effects for
Students in Upper
Elementary and Middle
School***

*R. Joseph Waddington
Mark Berends*

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program on student achievement for low-income students in upper elementary and middle school who used a voucher to transfer from public to private schools during the first four years of the program. We analyzed student-level longitudinal data from public and private schools taking the same statewide standardized assessment. Overall, voucher students experienced an average achievement loss of 0.15 SDs in mathematics during their first year of attending a private school compared with matched students who remained in a public school. This loss persisted regardless of the length of time spent in a private school. In English/Language Arts, we did not observe statistically meaningful effects. Although school vouchers aim to provide greater educational opportunities for students, the goal of improving the academic performance of low-income students who use a voucher to move to a private school has not yet been realized in Indiana. © 2018 by the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

INTRODUCTION

Educational reform efforts have often failed to deliver (Berends, Bodilly, & Kirby, 2002; Zimmer, Henry, & Kho, 2017). For instance, over the last decade, the federal government invested \$7 billion in School Improvement Grants (SIG)—the largest federal investment to date—to improve performance in struggling schools (Kahlenberg, 2017). These grants were aimed at the lowest performing schools and gave them four options from which to choose: (1) transform the school by bringing in a new principal; (2) turn the school around by firing a majority of the teachers and the principal; (3) restart the school by turning over its management to charter schools; or (4) close the school and enroll students in higher achieving district schools. The result? Research has shown this investment did not have a significant impact on improving student outcomes: “Overall, across all grades, we found that implementing any SIG-funded model had no significant impacts on math or reading test scores, high school graduation, or college enrollment” (Dragoset et al., 2017, p. 3).

Current federal leadership has turned from the SIG approach to school choice policies and programs aimed at improving low-performing schools. These programs include charter schools, interdistrict choice programs, and private school vouchers

*Author order was determined randomly. Each contributed equally to this paper.

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or tax credit programs. School vouchers, or scholarships, are provided to qualifying families so they can send their children to the schools of their choice, whether public or private, religious or nonreligious. If voucher programs were succeeding, we would expect that participating students are experiencing new opportunities to learn, increasing their achievement growth, and closing achievement gaps (e.g., socioeconomic and racial/ethnic). In this paper, we assess those expectations by examining the impact of Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program (ICSP)—the largest single statewide voucher program in the United States—on low-income students' math and English/Language Arts (ELA) achievement. Despite the program's large size, little is known about its effects on Indiana schools and students.

This study aims to address this gap in a context where vouchers have not been randomly assigned to families in Indiana. Instead, our analysis uses a rich set of longitudinal, student-level records for public and private school students in grades 3 through 8. We used a variety of estimation strategies to examine the program's impact on low-income students receiving a voucher and switching from a public to a private school during the first four years of the voucher program (2011/2012 through 2014/2015). This group of voucher students aligns with the initial eligibility requirements and intent of the Indiana voucher program. Our research questions are as follows:

- What is the yearly impact of receiving a voucher and switching to a private school on low-income students' math and ELA achievement compared to peers remaining in public schools?
- What are the differences in yearly voucher impacts across various subgroups of students (i.e., by sex, race/ethnicity, English proficiency, or special education status) or private schools (i.e., Catholic vs. Other Religious, or urban locale)?

Overall, we found no consistent evidence that vouchers promote increased academic achievement among low-income recipients. In contrast, students who use a voucher to attend private schools experienced a modest average achievement loss in mathematics and no effects in ELA. The achievement loss in mathematics is greatest for students in the first two years after receiving a voucher and persists through four years. Our findings in both subjects are consistent across most student subgroups.

Our research contributes to the existing school voucher literature in three distinct ways. First, Indiana's statewide school voucher program is the nation's most expansive in terms of enrollment and in providing scholarships to both low- and modest-income families.¹ Second, our study is one of only a handful that finds modest and statistically significant negative effects of school vouchers on student math achievement. Third, we examined the effects of a voucher program that operates within a different context from other programs, whereby many private schools were participating in statewide testing prior to the implementation of the voucher program. Finally, unlike other statewide studies that cover a shorter time frame (Abdulkadiroglu, Pathak, & Walters, 2018; Figlio & Karbownik, 2016; Mills & Wolf, 2017), we examined the impact for students who have received a voucher to attend private schools up to four years.

In what follows, we provide a brief background on the Indiana voucher program and the evidence about the effects of vouchers on student achievement based on prior rigorous research. We go on to describe the data and our approach to analyzing the effects of the first four years of the statewide program. We conclude with the results and a discussion of their implications.

¹ The State of Ohio has more students enrolled in voucher programs across the state. However, these students are spread across five different programs, each with their own eligibility criteria and focus.

THE INDIANA CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Currently, 15 states have voucher programs, and 181,175 students are using them to attend private schools (EdChoice, 2018). In Indiana, which has the largest single program, 35,458 students received a voucher during the 2017/2018 school year and 318 private schools participated (76 percent of private sector schools statewide) (Indiana Department of Education, 2018). Authorized in 2011, the ICSP provides state payments to qualifying Indiana families to help offset tuition at participating schools. When the program began, students qualified for vouchers based on their prior enrollment in a public school and their family's total household income. Starting in 2013/2014, the state removed the cap on the number of eligible Indiana students who can receive a scholarship. It also expanded the criteria for eligibility to include kindergarten students, siblings of voucher students, special education students, and those located in the attendance zones of failing public schools.

Although researchers have studied the effects of various school voucher programs and policies over the past two decades (for reviews, see Austin & Berends, 2018; Epple, Romano, & Urquiola, 2017; Figlio, 2009; Shakeel, Anderson, & Wolf, 2016; Zimmer & Bettinger, 2015), the Indiana voucher program is unique.² Unlike other programs, the ICSP is aimed at both low- and modest-income families (Indiana Department of Education, 2018). Families with the lowest income may obtain vouchers for up to 90 percent of tuition (average 2017/2018 voucher value in grades 1 through 8 of about \$4,800) at a participating private school if their annual income is equal to or less than 100 percent of the amount to qualify for reduced-price lunch, which is inclusive of free lunch eligibility (together referred to as "FRPL"), under the National School Lunch Program (Indiana Department of Education, 2018).³ For a four-person household, that income threshold was \$44,955. Moderate-income families may obtain 50 percent vouchers (average 2017/2018 voucher value in grades 1 through 8 of about \$2,900) if their annual income is equal to or less than 150 percent of the amount to qualify for FRPL; for a four-person household, that income threshold was \$67,433 (Indiana Department of Education, 2018).

VOUCHER RESEARCH ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES

Voucher programs are typically aimed at low-income families to offer educational opportunities they may not otherwise access: schools that better meet their children's academic needs. Proponents claim that, as more schools compete for students, all schools will become more effective in encouraging positive student outcomes, especially for low-income students (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Friedman (1955, 1962) was one of the first to use this market theory, arguing that the cost of K-12 education should be covered by the government but parents should be able to choose the schools their children attend, whether public or private. Toward this end, Friedman promoted giving parents government vouchers as a way to accomplish a system of education that was publicly financed but delivered privately and publicly.

Critics, however, raise questions about the empirical validity of the market theory's key assumptions about parents as consumers (demand-side), schools (supply-side),

² With the new Trump administration and discussions about turning Title I money into vouchers and the possibility of bundling state and federal education funds, states like Indiana may be poised to significantly expand their voucher programs (Berends, 2018). Thus, understanding the effects of Indiana's student voucher use informs state and national education policy at a critical time.

³ The amount of a voucher in Indiana is determined based on the lesser of the private school's tuition and fees (at which the student must first be accepted before receiving a voucher) and the state per-pupil subsidy granted to the public school district (corporation) in which the student resides. In 2017/2018, net voucher payments from the Indiana Department of Education to private schools totaled \$154 million.

and the products that a market in education would generate (Austin & Berends, 2018; Finnegan, 2007; Henig, 1995; Hess, 2002; Levin, 1998). They emphasize that public schools support the “common school” model that promotes civic and democratic values among its students. In this light, critics argue, vouchers may increase already existing inequalities by skimming off the best students, decrease support of public schools due to falling enrollments in an era of fiscal challenges, and undermine our democracy.⁴ Moreover, students who transfer with vouchers may experience achievement losses because student mobility is often associated with negative school outcomes, independent of the quality of the school (Grigg, 2012; Schwartz, Stiefel, & Cordes, 2017).

With the global expansion in the number of voucher programs, research addressing the effects of these programs has increased as well (Berends, 2018). Evidence can be drawn from both publicly and privately funded voucher programs in the United States and from international research (Epple, Romano, & Urquiola, 2017; Figlio, 2009; Shakeel, Anderson, & Wolf, 2016; Zimmer & Bettinger, 2015).

A number of voucher studies examining impacts on student achievement outcomes have focused on specific cities: Milwaukee (Greene, Peterson, & Du, 1998, 1999; Rouse, 1998; Witte, 2000; Witte et al., 2014), Charlotte (Cowen, 2008; Greene, 2001), Cleveland (Metcalf et al., 2002), Dayton (Howell & Peterson, 2006), New York City (Barnard et al., 2003; Jin, Barnard, & Rubin, 2010; Krueger & Zhu, 2004), and Washington, DC (Howell & Peterson, 2006; Wolf et al., 2010, 2011, 2013; Wolf & McShane, 2013). Generally, the experimental and quasi-experimental research in these cities shows either modest positive effects on student test scores for certain subgroups of students and for certain years of program participation, or no effects at all (Austin & Berends, 2018; Epple, Romano, & Urquiola, 2017; Figlio, 2009; Zimmer & Bettinger, 2015).⁵

More recent statewide studies on the impact of voucher programs in Louisiana and Ohio have shown negative effects on student achievement. Abdulkadiroglu, Pathak, and Walters (2018) examined the Louisiana Scholarship Program, analyzing data between 2008 (the first year of the program) and 2012. Following students who won and lost a lottery to receive a scholarship, the authors found significant and large negative effects for students who participated in the first year of the voucher program, with declines of 16 percentile points in math and 14 percentile points in reading. The effects were consistent across income groups, geographic areas, and private school characteristics (higher and lower proportion of white students, enrollment, achievement scores, and whether the private school was Catholic).

Mills and Wolf (2017) investigated the Louisiana program through its second year, reporting substantial negative effects in both math and reading in year one, but less negative effects in year two. Only the effects for mathematics were statistically significant after year two. In mathematics in year two, they found that students who won the voucher lottery and transferred to a public school scored 0.34 of a SD below those students who lost the voucher lottery. “The magnitude of these negative estimates,” the researchers wrote, “is unprecedented in the literature of random-assignment evaluations of school voucher programs” (p. 2).

⁴ During the first two years of the voucher program, public school districts (corporations) experienced a reduction in their state funding based on the number of students who left the district after receiving a voucher to attend a private school. Beginning in the 2013/2014 school year, the state began restoring these per-pupil subsidies back to public school districts to make up for state funding lost due to district students participating in the voucher program.

⁵ The exception to these overall findings is a recent study in Washington, DC on the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program that found negative effects in mathematics after the first and second years of the program (Dynarski et al., 2017, 2018). The findings in DC are consistent with those of the statewide voucher programs.

These findings are consistent with what Figlio and Karbownik (2016) found in their evaluation of the Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program. The researchers used propensity score-matching to estimate the program's effects because the program did not rely on a lottery to provide scholarships. Analyzing student-level data between 2007 and 2010, with several estimation specifications, they found significant negative effects on both reading and mathematics scores: about -0.40 to -0.20 SDs in reading and -0.60 to -0.45 SDs in mathematics.

In our study of the ICSP, we also found negative effects in mathematics for students who transfer from public to private schools with a voucher. However, our research differs from evaluations of the Louisiana and Ohio statewide voucher programs in a number of ways. Unlike Louisiana and Ohio, students in Indiana's public and private schools have all taken the same state tests for a number of years. Thus, our findings come from a state context where annual testing in grades 3 through 8 is common across the board, particularly in a broad sample of over 300 voucher-participating private schools. In the year prior to the voucher program (2010/2011), the average private school has achievement 0.1 to 0.2 SDs above the state mean in both math and ELA. While average private school achievement varies, many higher performing private schools participate in Indiana's voucher program than in other states.⁶ In addition to broader income eligibility in Indiana, students from all public schools are eligible as opposed to just those enrolled in the lowest performing schools as in Ohio. While students in low- or modest-income families may be eligible to receive a voucher, we focused on the lowest-income students for estimation purposes and better comparisons of our findings with other contexts.

DATA AND MEASURES

Data Description

We used six years (2009/2010 school year through 2014/2015) of longitudinal, student-level demographic and test score records for this study, obtained through a data-sharing agreement with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). The records contain information about students attending public (traditional, charter, and magnet) and private schools (including voucher and non-voucher students) that participated in the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+) program. The ISTEP+ is aligned to the Indiana Academic Standards and serves as the main accountability-linked assessment for Indiana students in grades 3 through 8. Testing has taken place each spring since 2009 in mathematics and ELA (Indiana Department of Education, 2011).⁷

Indiana is unique because many private schools participate in the ISTEP+ program and other state reporting (304 schools statewide as of 2015). Participation in ISTEP+ testing is a requirement of all private schools participating in the voucher program.⁸ However, nearly all K-8 Catholic schools and over 80 other religious and nonreligious K-8 private schools, participated in statewide testing as part of their accreditation process for several years prior to the start of the voucher program. Additional private schools began taking the ISTEP+ after starting participation in

⁶ Most elite, nonsectarian private schools do not participate in the voucher program.

⁷ The ISTEP+ is vertically equated across grades and consists of multiple-choice, constructed-response, and extended-response items scored using item response theory methods. Reliability coefficients range from 0.88 to 0.94 in ELA and 0.88 to 0.95 in math (Indiana Department of Education, 2011).

⁸ The Indiana Department of Education holds voucher program-participating private schools accountable through their performance on the ISTEP+ assessment by restricting their ability to enroll students receiving vouchers should the school have two consecutive years of poor testing performance.

the voucher program. All students in private schools, including enrolling students with vouchers, take the test, regardless of whether an individual student received a voucher.

The robust annual participation in statewide testing and other reporting by private schools offers several advantages. First, we can make apples-to-apples achievement comparisons between voucher private and non-voucher public school students. Second, the number of participating schools and the testing of non-voucher private school students allow us to better describe the academic composition of the private school sector in Indiana. Third, because each student's testing records are longitudinally linked, we can observe changes in an individual student's achievement over time, regardless of the sector in which they are enrolled.

Measures

The primary outcomes of interest are students' annual ISTEP+ test scores in mathematics and ELA. These are the two subjects tested annually during grades 3 through 8. We standardized each of the scaled test scores relative to the mean and SD of students statewide within each subject, grade, and year of testing.⁹ The standardized measures allow us to draw comparisons, in SD units relative to the state average of all test takers.

We used several student demographic and background characteristics reported in the IDOE data, including indicators of each student's gender, race/ethnicity,¹⁰ FRPL status, English Language Learner status (ELL), special education status, and grade level. We created an indicator for grade retention from the previous year. We also observed whether a student received a voucher in each year. This allowed us to construct an annual indicator of voucher receipt and a measure of the total number of years a student received a voucher.

Along with voucher recipient status, we also observed the student's school of record within each year. The school records contain each school's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) unique identification number. Using the NCES ID, we linked the schools to the Common Core of Data (CCD) and the Private School Universe Survey (PSS) to augment the available school-level data.¹¹ We used these data to create binary indicators of the school type (e.g., public, charter, magnet, Catholic, or other private) and private school locale (urban, suburban, or town/rural). We manually entered this information for schools with missing data.

ANALYTICAL SAMPLE AND ESTIMATION STRATEGY

Our main research question pertains to the academic achievement of voucher students who attend private schools. In an ideal experimental setting, voucher-eligible students attending public schools would be randomly assigned an offer to receive a voucher. We could then estimate unbiased intent-to-treat effects of being offered a

⁹ Although the ISTEP+ is vertically equated, we did not use scaled scores for our outcome as the variation in scales differs between grade levels. This introduces additional measurement error; however, we adjusted for differences between years and across tests by controlling for grade and year fixed effects in all models.

¹⁰ We re-coded the race/ethnicity variable into four categories: White, Black/African American, Latino/a, and Other Race/Ethnicity, due to the small number of voucher students identifying as either Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or multiracial.

¹¹ The CCD contains annual demographic and background information for the universe of public schools. Similarly, the biennial PSS contains similar information for private schools. We applied CCD data to all public schools for each corresponding year. Similarly, we applied PSS data from the most recent prior year to all private schools.

voucher on student achievement by comparing the achievement gains of students offered and not offered a voucher. We would then also be able to use this assignment as an instrument in a two-stage least-squares approach for actual voucher use and attendance in a private school. Here, we could obtain the treatment-on-the-treated effects of private school attendance on student achievement. Many voucher programs (e.g., Milwaukee, New York City, Washington, DC, Louisiana) either randomly assigned vouchers or held voucher lotteries, enabling researchers to estimate causal effects.¹²

In Indiana, vouchers were not randomly assigned to students through the ICSP, making it challenging to assess the causal effects of receiving a voucher and attending a private school on student outcomes. Individual private schools participating in the voucher program are not required to hold lotteries to determine enrollment, except for oversubscribed schools. Most private schools had an excess supply of available seats over the period of our study, and we found no private schools that implemented enrollment lotteries.¹³ We did observe any student who received a voucher and attended a private school in grades 3 through 8.¹⁴

Without a random-assignment of vouchers or a natural experiment such as a lottery, any assessment of the effects of Indiana's voucher program is subject to selection bias. Choosing to apply for and receiving a voucher depends on the active choices of parents and their children. These choices typically depend on student background, parental preferences, motivation, and available opportunities in public or other choice (e.g., charter, magnet) schools. For example, if students with high aptitude or motivation apply for and receive a voucher, then the performance of voucher students might appear better than non-voucher students because of potentially unobserved background differences between students. Thus, we cannot simply compare the achievement of voucher and non-voucher students.

Given the availability of longitudinal data and the eligibility criteria of the ICSP, we took several steps to mitigate selection bias. First, we will describe the process of creating a comparable sample of students who receive a voucher and attend a private school and students who do not receive a voucher and remained enrolled in a public school. Then, we will describe multiple strategies used to estimate the effects of the voucher program on student achievement. For both the sample construction and estimation strategies, we drew upon important lessons from recent literature that uses nonexperimental approaches to replicate the experimental estimates of school choice evaluations (Anderson & Wolf, 2017; Bifulco, 2012; Fortson et al., 2014) and the implementation of those lessons in the nonexperimental evaluation of charter schools (Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2013; Dobbie & Fryer, 2013, 2017).

We implemented several data restrictions prior to sample construction (see Appendix A).¹⁵ These restrictions included requiring each student to have at least three years of test scores, including two years before receiving a voucher (a pre-baseline and baseline year). After these restrictions, we have a sample of 11,756 voucher students and 556,919 public school students.

¹² Recent evaluations of charter schools (e.g., Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2011; Angrist et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2015; Dobbie & Fryer, 2013) also used a similar approach in instances where charter schools hold enrollment lotteries.

¹³ We contacted each of the five Catholic dioceses in the state, the Indiana Non-Public Education Association, and the Indiana Department of Education to confirm this in the first years of the voucher program.

¹⁴ We observed very few voucher "decliners," or students who applied for a voucher but did not receive one. From principal and parent interviews, families only applied for vouchers if they knew they met the eligibility criteria.

¹⁵ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

Voucher Student Sample

A student must meet several eligibility criteria to qualify for a voucher in Indiana. One criterion from the initial implementation of the policy was that a student had to be enrolled in a public school (either traditional public, charter, or magnet) for at least one year immediately prior to receiving a voucher. In our cleaned data, 4,384 students moved from a public to a private school for the first time after receiving a voucher.¹⁶ Of the students who were once enrolled in a private school without a voucher, 209 left for one year to attend a public school, and returned to a private school after receiving a voucher.¹⁷ The other 7,163 students received a voucher for the first time while previously enrolled in a private school, largely a result of expanded voucher eligibility criteria beginning in the 2013/2014 school year.¹⁸

Our focus solely on the voucher students moving from a public to a private school for the first time yields several advantages for our analysis. First, this movement is typical of other voucher programs, and most evaluations compare voucher and public school students. With longitudinal records of public school students, we can draw comparisons of voucher students switching to private schools with students remaining in public schools and not receiving a voucher. Second, previous enrollment in a public school allowed us to establish a baseline level of student achievement before receiving a voucher and attending a private school for the first time observed in our data. We could have established a baseline prior to receiving a voucher for students previously enrolled in a private school; however, these students have prior private school experience that may have influenced the impacts of receiving a voucher and attending a private school in a different manner than first-time private school enrollees. We display comparisons of all voucher and non-voucher private school students in Appendix Table A1.¹⁹ We found that voucher students initially enrolled in private schools are much higher achieving and less diverse along demographic and academic dimensions.

The second eligibility criterion for all voucher students is based on family income. The voucher income thresholds based on household size directly correspond to the thresholds for reduced-price lunch (RPL) eligibility, which is inclusive of free lunch eligibility (Indiana Department of Education, 2018). Students in families at or below the income threshold for RPL eligibility are eligible for a “90 percent” or “full” voucher for tuition at a private school. Students in families at or below 150 percent of the income threshold for RPL eligibility are eligible for a “50 percent” or “half” voucher.

Because of the direct correspondence with RPL eligibility, we focused on the 3,883 voucher students switching from public to private schools that either received a “full” voucher or received FRPL in the two years prior to receiving a voucher. We refer to this group of voucher students as “low-income.”²⁰ We found non-low-income voucher students have much higher achievement before receiving a voucher and are less diverse along demographic and academic dimensions (see Appendix

¹⁶ Some of these students eventually exit a private school after receiving a voucher and return to a public school. We included both students who remained in a private school and those who returned to a public school in our analysis.

¹⁷ We believe these 209 students and their families made these decisions to become eligible for a voucher.

¹⁸ Of these students, 649 later attended public school while 6,514 were always enrolled in a private school.

¹⁹ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

²⁰ As income fluctuates, we wanted to account for indications that a family is low-income in either the year before receiving a voucher (baseline year) or the year after. We used a similar procedure for public school students.

Table A1). Because we specifically focused on the lowest income voucher students who transitioned from a public to a private school, our analysis represents only a partial effect of the voucher program on student achievement. Thus, effects may differ for all other voucher students.

Public School Comparison Student Sample

As our voucher student sample consists of students leaving public schools to attend private schools, not all Indiana public schools are represented. One key takeaway from the quasi-experimental study design literature and the application of within-study comparisons in educational research (see Bifulco, 2012; Cook, Shadish, & Wong, 2008) is that treatment and comparison groups should be drawn from the same geographic location (i.e., the same school). So, we constrained our comparison sample to include only public school students of the same race/ethnicity and sex in the same grade, year, and public school as a student who receives a voucher and attends a private school the following year.²¹ This process also establishes a baseline year from which we can draw comparisons between voucher and public school students over time. We refer to the exact match between voucher and public students by race-sex-year-grade-school as a “matching cell.”

The exact matching approach on several observable dimensions helps to mitigate selection bias in terms of who does and does not receive a voucher. By matching students by grade, year, and school, we compare voucher and public school students in the same schooling context beginning at baseline. The exact matching based on a student's race and sex further accounts for variation in the selection process. For example, if students of a certain race/ethnicity were more or less likely to participate in the voucher program, we are now comparing them to their same-race peers who should share the same likelihood of selection into the program.

This is the same approach used by researchers in the nonexperimental evaluation of charter schools in Massachusetts, New York City, and Texas (see Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2013; Dobbie & Fryer, 2013, 2017). These researchers compared estimates using the nonexperimental approach with their own experimental estimates on the same sample of students and found similar results in terms of the effect of attending a charter school on student achievement or attainment outcomes. If differences existed, these researchers noted that the nonexperimental approach collectively tends to bias the effects slightly toward zero.

The exact matching approach shares important features with propensity score-matching (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983). Both approaches rely on the matching of students based on a limited set of observable characteristics of students that may be associated with the selection process. While the exact matching process is more precise than matching on propensity scores, the number of matching variables must be limited when using exact matching in order to construct a sufficiently powered sample of treatment and comparison students. We believe that race, sex, and sharing a baseline year, grade, and school are a reasonable set of criteria to mitigate selection bias, and there is an empirical basis for using these characteristics. Yet, as with propensity score-matching, we are adjusting for only observable differences between voucher and non-voucher students. Our estimates of the voucher program's effects remain subject to bias based on any unobservable characteristics that may drive selection into the program. We further detail these concerns when describing our approach to the estimation of voucher program effects.

²¹ Some public school students have peers who leave to attend a private school with a voucher across several grades and years. To avoid replicating individual students in our sample, we randomly chose which of a given public school student's years serves as the baseline year.

After constructing the matching cells, we further constrained our comparison sample to include only public school students who may be eligible to receive a full voucher. As we previously described, “full” voucher eligibility corresponds directly to the income threshold for RPL eligibility. Therefore, we constrained the public-school comparison group to students who also received FRPL in the baseline or first post-baseline year. By constraining our sample, we can draw more relevant comparisons between low-income voucher students and non-voucher, low-income public school students who would also be considered “eligible” to receive a full voucher. In effect, this mitigates the unobserved influence that family income may have on selecting to attend a private school. We compared all non-low-income public school students to their voucher-eligible public school peers in Appendix Table A2.²²

To finalize our analytical sample, we only included low-income voucher students who have a low-income public school peer of the same sex, race, and baseline school, grade, and year. Similarly, we only included public school students who have a voucher peer who shares the same characteristics as above at baseline. For each student, we have achievement data from at least three years in at least one subject: pre-baseline, baseline, and at least one year post-baseline.

Our analytical sample includes 34,587 low-income public school students who are in the same school, grade, and year at baseline as 3,363 students of the same sex and race/ethnicity who received a voucher and attended a private school in the subsequent year. Given data constraints, we matched 87 percent of all low-income voucher students who switch from a public to a private school to at least one public school peer at baseline. We compared the matched versus unmatched voucher students in Appendix Table A1 and public school students in Appendix Table A2.

Student Descriptive Characteristics

Before moving to our approach to estimation, we describe our analytical sample and display the results in Table 1. More than half of the voucher students in our sample are racial or ethnic minorities, with a slightly lower proportion of black students (0.238) and higher proportion of Latino/a students (0.226) relative to their low-income public school peers (0.252 proportion of black students and 0.168 of Latino/a students). The proportion of voucher students classified as ELLs is 0.123 and as special education students is 0.079 at baseline. In the voucher sample, ELL students are overrepresented and special education students underrepresented compared to the public school peer sample. Over half of the low-income voucher and public school students are attending urban public schools at baseline.

In terms of academic achievement, low-income voucher students are lower achieving compared to the state average by nearly one-fourth of an SD in both math and ELA. However, voucher students are higher achieving than their low-income public school peers by about a tenth of an SD in both subjects. The low average achievement and diversity of low-income voucher students previously attending public schools suggests that private schools are not “cream-skimming” the highest achieving students from public schools per se, but there is slight positive selection when comparing to voucher-eligible peers remaining in public schools.

In Table 1 we provided a comparison between low-income voucher and public school students. However, we can also compare low-income voucher students and all

²² All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

Table 1. Descriptive comparison of matched analytical sample of low-income voucher and public school students in Indiana.

	Voucher	Public
Students	3,363	34,587
Schools	265	871
	Baseline measures	
Female	0.526	0.527
Black	0.238	0.252
Latino/a	0.226	0.168
Other race/ethnicity	0.076	0.027
English Language Learner	0.123	0.093
Special education	0.079	0.114
Retained	0.008	0.008
Attended charter	0.109	0.065
Attended magnet	0.027	0.020
Attended suburban school	0.230	0.243
Attended town/rural school	0.212	0.246
Mean math score	-0.244	-0.335
Mean ELA score	-0.220	-0.333
Mean math gain	-0.023	-0.055
Mean ELA gain	-0.010	-0.046
	First-Year post-baseline measures	
Attended Catholic school	0.538	-
Attended other private school	0.462	-
First-Year exit rate	0.163	-
Mean math score	-0.380	-0.330
Mean ELA score	-0.213	-0.313
Mean math gain	-0.135	0.005
Mean ELA gain	0.004	0.019

Notes: Table displays voucher and public school (traditional public, charter, or magnet) students with at least three years of test scores in either math or ELA (pre-baseline, baseline, first-year post-baseline) and matched within the same race-sex-year-grade-public school matching cell at baseline. Number of public schools reported at baseline and voucher private schools in first-year post-baseline. ISTEP+ Math and ELA scores measured in SD units, relative to the Indiana statewide mean and SD within each grade and year.

Source: Authors' calculations.

other private school students for added context (see Appendix Table A1).²³ Besides income differences, low-income voucher students switching from public to private schools are much more likely to be a racial or ethnic minority or ELL. This group of voucher students is also substantially lower achieving than their private school peers. Thus, low-income voucher students are moving into environments substantially behind their peers in terms of academic achievement (by up to more than a half SD), resulting in this group of voucher students experiencing a markedly different schooling context than previously.

Estimation Strategy

Although we have specifically matched low-income voucher and public school students who are more closely aligned than a broader sample of voucher and public

²³ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

school students, we still found a number of meaningful differences between the two groups at baseline. Voucher students are higher achieving than their matched public school peers at baseline. This observable difference, among others, suggests that the two groups of students may also differ on unobservable dimensions that influence selection into the voucher program as well as subsequent achievement outcomes. If we did not account for these baseline differences, our results would be subject to selection bias. Below, we describe our estimation approach that helps to enhance the internal validity of our estimates of the Indiana voucher program's impact on student achievement.

Our preferred model is an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model with several covariates. We estimated this model for each individual year posttreatment, resulting in a total of four individual models to estimate the voucher program effects on student achievement in the first, second, third, and fourth year after receiving a voucher. We also estimated different effects for each subject (math and ELA) as the outcome in separate models, though the structure of the equation remained the same. We display the model for the first-year estimates in equation (1) below.

$$Y_{icgt} = \alpha + \beta \text{Voucher}_{icgt} + \pi Y_{icgt-1} + \omega Y_{icgt-2} + \delta \mathbf{X}_{icgt-1} + \theta_g + \tau_c + v_{icgt} \quad (1)$$

Here, the achievement level (Y) for each student (i) in matching cell (c), grade (g), and post-baseline year (t) is a function of receiving a voucher and attending a private school (Voucher_{icgt}) as well as a host of other covariates.

In this model, we controlled for a vector of student baseline academic characteristics (\mathbf{X}_{icgt-1}) including baseline classification as an ELL or special education student. Grade fixed effects (θ_g) account for systematic differences in exams across grade levels. Matching cell fixed effects (τ_c) account for unobserved differences between the race-sex-year-grade-school matching cells at baseline. Effectively, these also account for systematic differences in exams across years as students within each cell take exams always within the same calendar year posttreatment. The term v_{icgt} represents school cluster-robust standard errors to account for serial correlation among students within the same baseline public school cohort (same grade and year).

We also included in our preferred model two measures of a student's prior achievement in the same subject as the outcome, one at baseline (Y_{icgt-1}) and one pre-baseline (Y_{icgt-2}). Because lagged achievement scores are endogenous in the post-baseline years, these controls remain as the baseline and pre-baseline achievement measures for our estimates in the second, third, and fourth years post-baseline. In Appendix B, we detailed three alternative model specifications regarding the inclusion of a student's prior achievement in addition to a host of other robustness checks of our main results.²⁴ In the first, we controlled for only baseline achievement. In the second, we controlled for the first-, second-, and third-order polynomials of a student's baseline and pre-baseline achievement. In the third, we also controlled for the first-order baseline and pre-baseline measures of a student's prior achievement in the off-subject (e.g., we also control for prior ELA achievement when math is the outcome and vice versa).

After accounting for these pretreatment achievement differences between voucher and public school students, we describe the estimates of the voucher program impacts as the value-added achievement gains (or losses) from baseline. Thus, we define our main estimate (β) as the difference in the achievement gain (or loss) from baseline in a given post-baseline year between low-income voucher and public school students who share the same race/ethnicity and sex and are from the

²⁴ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

same baseline public school cohort. This estimate will be minimally biased if we have accounted for all covariates that could explain differences between the two groups.

By incorporating both baseline and pre-baseline achievement, we mitigate concerns regarding differing pretreatment trends between voucher and public students. This pretreatment phenomenon, known in the job-training literature as "Ashenfelter's Dip" (Ashenfelter, 1978), suggests that a substantial drop in student performance may be a signal to parents to have their child change schools. If this were the case, some students may be more likely to receive a voucher and attend a private school than others, yielding biased estimates. We believe that by accounting for pretreatment achievement in our models, we have effectively negated concerns with pretreatment trend differences between voucher students and their matched public school peers. However, because we estimated separate models for each post-baseline year, we could not incorporate a standard event study set of estimates derived from the same model to demonstrate parallel pretreatment trends between voucher and public students.

To further assuage these concerns, we estimated a set of two additional models, one with baseline achievement as the outcome and another with pre-baseline achievement as the outcome. These models contained the voucher indicator as well as the baseline student characteristics, matching cell fixed effects, grade fixed effects (for the pre-baseline model only, as these are collinear in the baseline model with the matching cells) and cluster-robust standard errors. The estimate on the voucher indicator shows the baseline and pre-baseline achievement level differences between voucher and public students within each matching cell. Although we found statistically significant differences in achievement levels between matched voucher and public students, the difference is a consistent 0.09 to 0.11 SD between the pre-baseline and baseline years (see Table 2 of our results). This suggests a parallel pretreatment achievement trend between the two groups. In addition to this investigation of pretreatment trends, we also conducted a series of other robustness checks for our preferred model estimates, all described in Appendix B and the results displayed in Appendix Tables B1 and B2.²⁵

Regarding the external validity of our findings, because of how we defined our sample, all our estimates of the voucher program effect on achievement rely on low-income students who use a voucher to switch from public to private schools. This limits the generalizability of our findings because we did not estimate voucher effects for those who are always enrolled in private schools.²⁶ Voucher students switching from public to private schools are different in terms of baseline characteristics from voucher students always enrolled in private schools (see Appendix Table A1).²⁷ Our approach also requires at least three successive years of test score data, which excludes many students from the analysis.²⁸ Thus, most of our estimates of voucher program impacts are constrained to students in grades 5 to 8.

²⁵ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

²⁶ We did not estimate voucher effects for students always enrolled in private schools because we did not want to make strong assumptions about prior achievement or geographic matching without a comparison school context.

²⁷ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

²⁸ We could estimate models by only controlling for baseline achievement and not including pre-baseline achievement. This would require only a minimum of two years of observations for each student. As this is a nonexperimental evaluation, we valued enhanced internal validity over broader external validity. We had enough power to detect effects, particularly through three-years posttreatment. We also used the three years of observations data minimum to help identify low-income voucher students and omit voucher students making multiple switches.

Table 2. Annual effects of Indiana voucher program on student achievement.

A. Math achievement						
	Pre-Baseline	Baseline	First year with voucher	Second year with voucher	Third year with voucher	Fourth year with voucher
All voucher	0.088***	0.106***	-0.146***	-0.172***	-0.168***	-0.173**
[Voucher students = 3,350]	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.059)
Baseline covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Baseline and pre-baseline achievement	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Grade fixed effects	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Matching cell fixed effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>N</i> all students	37,601	37,601	37,601	21,354	9,156	1,757
Overall <i>r</i> ²	0.010	0.039	0.494	0.566	0.540	0.504
One total year with voucher	0.076***	0.069***	-0.135***			
[Voucher students = 1,497]	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.017)			
Two total years with voucher	0.097***	0.126***	-0.158***	-0.156***		
[Voucher students = 1,076]	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.019)	(0.019)		
Three total years with voucher	0.117***	0.139**	-0.145***	-0.181***	-0.147***	
[Voucher students = 602]	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	
Four total years with voucher	0.004	0.167***	-0.245***	-0.219***	-0.246***	-0.173**
[Voucher students = 175]	(0.073)	(0.081)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.059)

B. ELA achievement						
	Pre-Baseline	Baseline	First year with voucher	Second year with voucher	Third year with voucher	Fourth year with voucher
All voucher	0.097***	0.111***	-0.002	-0.038**	0.013	0.062
[Voucher students = 3,348]	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.053)
Baseline covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Baseline and pre-baseline achievement	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Grade fixed effects	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Matching cell fixed effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>N</i> all students	37,264	37,264	37,264	21,459	9,280	1,995
Overall <i>r</i> ²	0.021	0.086	0.498	0.537	0.552	0.490
One total year with voucher	0.069**	0.086***	0.009			
[Voucher students = 1,494]	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.016)			
Two total years with voucher	0.117***	0.124***	-0.005	-0.018		
[Voucher students = 1,077]	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.018)	(0.019)		
Three total years with voucher	0.131***	0.162***	-0.056*	-0.032*	0.021	
[Voucher students = 602]	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.026)	
Four total years with voucher	0.022	0.077	-0.010	-0.153***	-0.009	0.061
[Voucher students = 175]	(0.073)	(0.078)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.052)

Notes: * $P \leq 0.050$; ** $P \leq 0.010$; *** $P \leq 0.001$. ISTEP+ Math and ELA achievement measured in SD units, relative to the Indiana state mean and SD within each grade and year. Number of voucher students in brackets. Robust standard errors clustered by baseline cohort (year-grade-school) are in parentheses. Source: Authors' calculations.

RESULTS

Main Effects of Receiving a Voucher and Attending a Private School

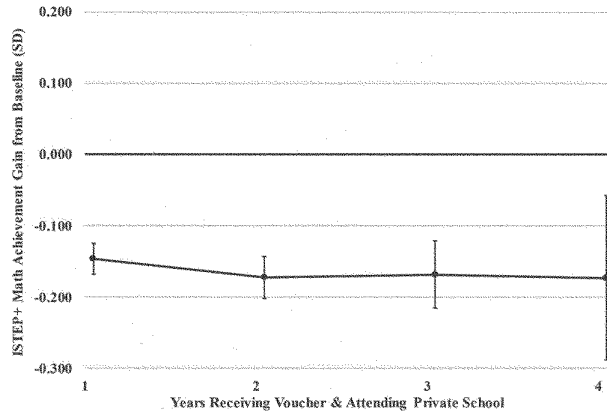
We begin by describing the estimated yearly effects in the first four years of the Indiana voucher program for low-income voucher students switching from a public to a private school. In Table 2, we display the results for mathematics and ELA. The first two columns provide the pre-baseline (i.e., year before baseline) and baseline test score estimates in columns 1 and 2, respectively. In mathematics, students who switch from public to private schools with a voucher had an estimated score of 0.106 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) at baseline and 0.088 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) at pre-baseline above their matched peers remaining in public schools. In ELA, the estimates were 0.111 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) at baseline and 0.097 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) at pre-baseline. In both mathematics and ELA, these baseline and pre-baseline estimates reveal that students who switch from public to private schools with a voucher scored slightly higher while enrolled in a public school compared with their public school peers. The pre-baseline and baseline estimates were roughly the same, providing little evidence of divergent pretreatment trends; rather, there was a consistent levels difference in test scores between matched voucher and public students.

The estimates for the impact by year after receiving a voucher and switching from a public to a private school appear in the third through sixth columns of results in Table 2. In the first year, voucher students scored an average of -0.146 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) below their matched public school peers in mathematics. This average loss increased to -0.172 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) in the second year and then remained consistent at -0.168 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) in the third year, and then -0.173 ($P \leq 0.010$) in the fourth year after receiving a voucher and attending a private school.

The lower part of the mathematics panel of Table 2 shows separate estimates by each cohort of students based on the total number of years observed receiving a voucher. The yearly estimates above have a changing sample, whereas the cohort analysis keeps a consistent sample. To produce these findings, we constrained our sample to include only voucher and public school students who have one, two, three, or four total years of posttreatment data within each cell.

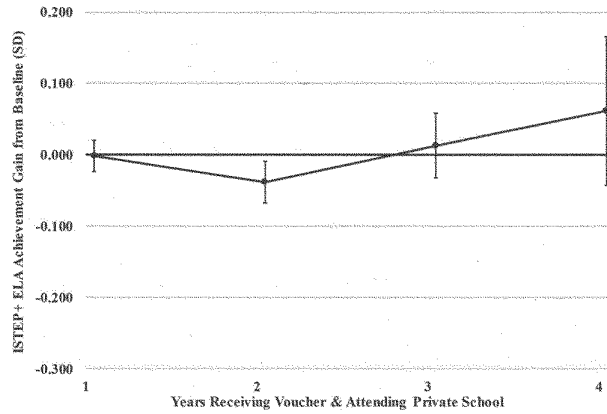
For students who were observed using vouchers for all four years, their mathematics achievement was 0.167 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) higher at baseline compared with their peers who remained in public schools. This difference was larger than what we found for all voucher students in the first row of Table 2. The cohort of students using vouchers for four total years scored -0.245 SD ($P \leq 0.001$) lower than their matched public school peers in year one. By year four, the negative effect shrunk to -0.173 SD ($P \leq 0.010$). An important caveat for these estimates is that we only observed a small number of students who receive a voucher and attend a private school for a total of four years (175 total students). For all other cohorts, we did not observe any meaningful differences with the overall first-, second-, and third-year estimates.

In ELA (Table 2), most of the value-added estimates for voucher students were not statistically significant, indicating that there were no differences in ELA achievement gains from baseline when comparing voucher students with their matched public school peers. The one exception was the estimate for students in the second year revealing that voucher students scored -0.038 SD ($P \leq 0.010$) below their public school peers. Although statistically significant, the estimate was quite small and disappears immediately in the third year. The second-year achievement loss in ELA was even larger (-0.153 SD, $P \leq 0.001$) for the cohort of students receiving a voucher for all four years; however, the loss also immediately dissipated. In addition to the estimates in Table 2, we display our main yearly effects in Figures 1 and 2.



Source: Authors' calculations.

Figure 1. Mean Math Achievement Gain from Baseline for Indiana Voucher Students.



Source: Authors' calculations.

Figure 2. Mean ELA Achievement Gain from Baseline for Indiana Voucher Students.

Robustness Checks

We subjected our preferred main effect estimates in math and ELA to a series of robustness checks. We fully describe the rationale behind each of the robustness checks in Appendix B and display the results for math in Appendix Table B1 and for ELA in Appendix Table B2.²⁹ Here, we provide a brief synopsis. In total, we estimated seven alternative models to assess the robustness of the main voucher effects. The robustness checks include: (1) controlling only for baseline achievement; (2) using a polynomial specification of baseline and pre-baseline achievement; (3) adding additional controls for prior achievement in the off subject; (4) including structural and nonstructural school change indicators; (5) constraining our results to only those students making structural school changes; (6) keeping students who exited private schools in the treatment group; and (7) taking out the Indianapolis urban area schools. The robustness checks largely revealed consistent findings with our preferred yearly estimates, primarily differing by no more than ± 0.020 SD for any one year.

One notable difference is when we restricted our sample to only students making structural changes (that is, changing schools due to normal grade progression) using a voucher to switch to a private school. In math, we observed a slightly lower first-year achievement loss (-0.127 SD, $P \leq 0.001$). However, the second- (-0.195 SD, $P \leq 0.001$), third- (-0.220 SD, $P \leq 0.001$), and fourth-year (-0.261 SD, $P \leq 0.050$) losses became increasingly larger when compared to the overall voucher effects. We believe more motivated families are more likely to make nonstructural moves (changing schools for any other reason), hence, the greater overall losses for students making structural moves. Despite the magnitude differences of these estimates, the large standard errors suggest that these are not statistically different from our preferred estimates.

Subgroup Effects

We found consistent evidence of modest annual achievement losses from baseline in math and null effects in ELA when comparing voucher students with their matched public school peers. However, these average estimates for all voucher students may either differ or be consistent across various subgroups of students. Therefore, we disaggregated the results further by student sex, race/ethnicity, student baseline ELL, and special education status;³⁰ whether a student remains enrolled in a private school; type of private school; and the location in which a voucher student previously attended a public school (a proxy for locality of their residence). We calculated these estimates by introducing interactions of the student subgroup with the voucher indicator in our preferred model. The main voucher effect in these models represents the voucher impact for the reference group (e.g., males), while the voucher effect for the interacted group (e.g., females) is calculated through the linear combination of the main effect and the estimate of the interaction.

In Tables 3 and 4, we display the results of our heterogeneity analysis by student subgroups for math and ELA, respectively. The first column in Tables 3 and 4 contains the baseline test scores indicating how much higher or lower baseline

²⁹ All appendices are available at the end of this article as it appears in JPAM online. Go to the publisher's website and use the search engine to locate the article at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

³⁰ Prior research indicated that students are less likely to be classified as special education once enrolled in private schools (Wolf, Witte, & Fleming, 2012). We descriptively find a similar bias in Indiana (though not for ELL classification). For our subgroup results, we estimated differences based on a student's classification as a special education student at baseline, so we had minimal concern about this potential bias.

Table 3. Subgroup effects of Indiana voucher program on math achievement.

	Baseline	First year with voucher	Second year with voucher	Third year with voucher	Fourth year with voucher
Male [n = 1,590]	0.154*** ^(s) (0.023)	-0.143*** (0.016)	-0.164*** (0.022)	-0.164*** (0.035)	-0.144* (0.070)
Female [n = 1,760]	0.063** ^(s) (0.022)	-0.149*** (0.014)	-0.179*** (0.019)	-0.173*** (0.031)	-0.205* (0.089)
White [n = 1,542]	0.090*** (0.024)	-0.151*** (0.016)	-0.211*** ^(s) (0.021)	-0.200*** ^(s) (0.035)	-0.239*** (0.070)
Black [n = 795]	0.132*** (0.031)	-0.156*** (0.022)	-0.162*** (0.032)	-0.183*** (0.057)	-0.167*** (0.119)
Latino/a [n = 759]	0.108*** (0.033)	-0.124*** (0.023)	-0.089** ^(s) (0.031)	-0.067 ^(s) (0.043)	0.013 (0.113)
Other race/ethnicity [n = 254]	0.119 (0.067)	-0.147*** (0.038)	-0.205*** (0.053)	-0.295*** ^(s) (0.081)	- (0.081)
Non-English language learner [n = 2,931]	0.098*** (0.017)	-0.143*** (0.012)	-0.178*** (0.016)	-0.194*** ^(s) (0.027)	-0.250*** ^(s) (0.060)
English language learner [n = 412]	0.172*** (0.043)	-0.174*** (0.030)	-0.133*** (0.038)	-0.051 ^(s) (0.052)	0.150 ^(s) (0.142)
Non-Special education [n = 3,077]	0.092*** ^(s) (0.017)	-0.146*** (0.012)	-0.185*** (0.015)	-0.190*** (0.024)	- (0.024)
Special education [n = 263]	0.245*** ^(s) (0.056)	-0.133*** (0.040)	-0.141* (0.064)	-0.095 (0.098)	- (0.098)
Continue in private [n = 2,870]	0.137*** ^(s) (0.017)	-0.140*** (0.012)	-0.167*** (0.015)	-0.168*** (0.024)	- (0.024)
Exit & return to public [n = 480]	-0.072 ^(s) (0.040)	-0.183*** (0.029)	-0.232*** (0.052)	-0.172 (0.160)	- (0.160)
Catholic [n = 1,804]	0.099*** (0.022)	-0.123*** ^(s) (0.014)	-0.144*** ^(s) (0.019)	-0.127*** ^(s) (0.027)	-0.165* (0.068)
Other private [n = 1,546]	0.114*** (0.023)	-0.175*** ^(s) (0.017)	-0.210*** ^(s) (0.023)	-0.252*** ^(s) (0.044)	-0.193* (0.098)
Urban [n = 1,866]	0.115*** (0.022)	-0.154*** (0.015)	-0.168*** (0.021)	-0.157*** (0.035)	-0.191* (0.077)
Suburban [n = 773]	0.091** (0.032)	-0.114*** (0.024)	-0.167*** (0.032)	-0.216*** (0.045)	-0.048 (0.102)
Town/rural [n = 707]	0.098** (0.033)	-0.164*** (0.025)	-0.176*** (0.031)	-0.092 (0.049)	-0.181 (0.159)

Notes: * $P \leq 0.050$; ** $P \leq 0.010$; *** $P \leq 0.001$. ISTEP+ Math achievement measured in SD units, relative to the Indiana state mean and SD in each grade and year. We estimated subgroup effects by including subgroup interactions in our preferred model. Number of voucher students within each subgroup in brackets. Robust standard errors clustered by baseline cohort (year-grade-school) are in parentheses. ^(s)Indicates significant differences between subgroups ($P \leq 0.050$). Missing cells in fourth year indicate <15 students.

Source: Authors' calculations.

achievement is for different student groups (e.g., baseline estimates for black students receiving a voucher compared with their black peers remaining in public schools). In the subsequent columns of Tables 3 and 4 are the annual effects showing how much higher or lower student groups from baseline score in their first, second, third, and fourth year after receiving a voucher to attend a private school compared with their matched peers remaining in public schools (e.g., how much

Table 4. Subgroup effects of Indiana voucher program on ELA achievement.

	Baseline	First year with voucher	Second year with voucher	Third year with voucher	Fourth year with voucher
Male [n = 1,585]	0.169*** ^(s) (0.023)	0.013 (0.015)	-0.020 (0.022)	0.000 (0.033)	0.096 (0.076)
Female [n = 1,763]	0.060** ^(s) (0.022)	-0.017 (0.014)	-0.053** (0.019)	0.025 (0.031)	0.025 (0.060)
White [n = 1,538]	0.112*** (0.025)	-0.031* ^(s) (0.016)	-0.083*** ^(s) (0.022)	-0.034 ^(s) (0.033)	0.009 (0.050)
Black [n = 796]	0.152*** ^(s) (0.030)	0.051* ^(s) (0.021)	0.006 ^(s) (0.030)	0.054 (0.050)	0.096 (0.098)
Latino/a [n = 760]	0.065* ^(s) (0.030)	0.006 (0.021)	0.011 ^(s) (0.028)	0.074 ^(s) (0.041)	0.137 (0.121)
Other race/ethnicity [n = 254]	0.106 (0.062)	-0.019 (0.041)	-0.034 (0.058)	-0.030 (0.084)	-
Non-English language learner [n = 2,929]	0.118*** (0.017)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.047** (0.016)	-0.011 ^(s) (0.024)	0.038 (0.047)
English language learner [n = 412]	0.053 (0.036)	-0.011 (0.029)	0.020 (0.039)	0.125* ^(s) (0.056)	0.167 (0.151)
Non-Special education [n = 3,080]	0.088*** ^(s) (0.016)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.045** (0.015)	0.009 (0.023)	-
Special education [n = 258]	0.337*** ^(s) (0.058)	-0.013 (0.039)	0.047* (0.052)	0.035 (0.092)	-
Continue in private [n = 2,870]	0.138*** ^(s) (0.017)	0.000 (0.012)	-0.031* (0.015)	0.020 ^(s) (0.022)	-
Exit & return to public [n = 478]	-0.048 ^(s) (0.042)	-0.017 (0.026)	-0.121** (0.045)	-0.194 ^(s) (0.105)	-
Catholic [n = 1,804]	0.101*** (0.021)	0.036** ^(s) (0.014)	0.010 ^(s) (0.018)	0.056* ^(s) (0.025)	0.039 (0.061)
Other private [n = 1,544]	0.123*** (0.024)	-0.049*** ^(s) (0.016)	-0.104*** ^(s) (0.023)	-0.074 ^(s) (0.042)	0.115 (0.097)
Urban [n = 1,863]	0.118*** (0.021)	0.001 (0.015)	-0.023 (0.021)	0.027 (0.033)	0.028 (0.080)
Suburban [n = 772]	0.098* (0.032)	0.011 (0.021)	-0.025 (0.027)	0.002 (0.036)	0.157 (0.089)
Town/rural [n = 709]	0.106** (0.034)	-0.021 (0.023)	-0.089** (0.032)	0.013 (0.055)	0.044 (0.072)

Notes: * $P \leq 0.050$; ** $P \leq 0.010$; *** $P \leq 0.001$. ISTEP+ Math achievement measured in SD units, relative to the Indiana state mean and SD in each grade and year. We estimated subgroup effects by including subgroup interactions in our preferred model. Number of voucher students within each subgroup in brackets. Robust standard errors clustered by baseline cohort (year-grade-school) are in parentheses. ^(s)Indicates significant differences between subgroups ($P \leq 0.050$). Missing cells in fourth year indicate < 15 students.

Source: Authors' calculations.

higher or lower black students scored from baseline through one, two, three, and four years after receiving a voucher compared with their black peers who stayed in public schools). The estimates in Tables 3 and 4 are marked with an "(s)" if the differences in the value-added effects were significantly different, for example, between male and female voucher students, between black and white voucher students, or other subgroups of voucher students. Looking across student subgroups, the results were generally consistent with our overall findings. The losses

in math were widespread across most subgroups. Similarly, we found mostly null impacts in ELA across the same subgroups. We highlight some notable differences below.

First, there were some significant differences in the estimates for Latino/a and black voucher students. Latino/a students experienced significant mathematics losses in the first year of using a voucher compared with their matched Latino/a public school peers, but these losses dissipated over time. By years three and four, the Latino/a voucher estimates were no longer statistically significant, revealing that Latino/a voucher students and their matched Latino/a public school peers did not differ in their math scores after several years in the program. In addition, white voucher students' mathematics losses were significantly greater than those experienced by Latino/a voucher students as indicated with the "(s)" by the Latino/a estimates in Table 3 for the second and third years of using a voucher. In ELA, black voucher students experienced a small gain from baseline compared to their matched public school peers in the first year (0.051 SD, $P \leq 0.050$), which dissipates after two years and reemerges, albeit statistically insignificant, three and four years post-baseline. Latino/a students experience positive, but statistically insignificant gains from baseline in all four years. Also, in the first two years, black voucher students score significantly higher than white students, who experienced an average loss relative to their public school peers in the first (-0.036 SD, $P \leq 0.050$) and second (-0.084 SD, $P \leq 0.001$) year of receiving a voucher. Latino/a students also score higher than white students in years three and four post-baseline.

Second, there were significant differences in the mathematics estimates for students classified at baseline as ELL or special education. Although ELL and special education students experienced annual losses in mathematics over the first two years of receiving a voucher compared with their matched public school peers, there were no statistically significant differences at the 5 percent significance level (denoted "NS") between these student groups by the time ELL students used a voucher for three (-0.051 , NS) or four years (0.150, NS) or a special education student used a voucher for three years (-0.095 , NS) (see Table 3). In ELA, ELL students experienced a statistically significant gain compared to their public school peers in the third year of receiving a voucher and attending a private school (0.0125, $P \leq 0.050$). We also observed a positive ELA achievement gain for special education students after two years of receiving a voucher and attending a private school (0.047 SD, $P \leq 0.050$). Although the estimate after three years is consistent in magnitude (0.035SD, NS), the estimate is no longer statistically significant, primarily due to the small number of special education students observed receiving a voucher through three years.

Third, students who exited the voucher program and returned to a public school experienced larger losses in both subjects than their voucher peers. This is most evident in mathematics after one (-0.183 SD, $P \leq 0.001$) or two years (-0.232 SD, $P \leq 0.001$) and after two years in ELA (-0.121 , $P \leq 0.010$). This is a signal that students who left the voucher program and returned to a public school are among the lowest performers in private schools.

Fourth, we also note differences by type of private school, whether Catholic or other religious or nonreligious private. Although voucher students who attended a Catholic school experienced significant average losses compared to their matched peers across all four years, students attending other private schools experience even greater losses in the first three years (-0.175 SD, $P \leq 0.001$; -0.210 SD, $P \leq 0.001$; and -0.252 , $P \leq 0.001$, respectively). The difference between Catholic and other private school voucher students is more pronounced in ELA, as the difference between the two groups is statistically significant through three years, with voucher students attending other private schools experiencing an average achievement loss from baseline of between 0.050 to 0.100 SD in each year.

DISCUSSION

Although vouchers in Indiana are not randomly assigned, this study was able to make use of state administrative longitudinal student records to investigate the impacts of the Indiana voucher program on student achievement. Public and private school students in Indiana, including all students receiving a voucher, have taken the same assessment for several years, even prior to the implementation of the voucher program. This feature is a significant benefit to researchers, allowing for apples-to-apples comparisons of student achievement outcomes and the ability to capture longitudinal impacts.

Generally, we found that low-income voucher students in Indiana experienced similar average achievement in ELA after attending a private school as did their matched peers who remained in public schools. In math, voucher students experienced a substantial average achievement loss after attending a private school in comparison with their public school peers. The losses in math primarily accumulate during the first two years of attending a private school and persist. We found these overall results are consistent across several robustness checks and between most student subgroups. We also found no evidence of different pretreatment trends between voucher and public students; the validity of our estimates hinges on this key assumption being satisfied.

This study is one of a small, but growing number of studies to estimate such losses in math achievement for students who use a voucher to attend a private school. Our findings align with recent research on the Louisiana Scholarship Program (see Abdulkadiroglu, Pathak, & Walters, 2018; Mills & Wolf, 2017) the Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program (Figlio & Karbownik, 2016), and the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (Dynarski et al., 2017, 2018). We found a smaller average overall loss in math; however, we similarly found that the largest losses in math achievement occur during the first two years of receiving a voucher and attending private school. We also found that these losses persist through four years of receiving a voucher and attending a private school, notably different from prior studies.

We also did not find statistical evidence that voucher students experience an improvement in their average achievement after baseline the longer they are enrolled in a private school. One might expect that students and their private schools would adjust to better meet the educational needs of voucher students. Collectively, this does not appear to be the case. However, there may be notable differences among private schools that is worthy of additional research to examine whether some private schools help students adjust to a greater degree than others. Incorporating additional years of testing data, which will also include new students, will help to reduce the noise in the third- and fourth-year estimates. Additional information from teachers and principals also will help to shed more light on these trends—and possible explanations for them—as the program continues to grow.

We did find some differential effects by some student subgroups. In math, Latino/a students, by the third year of using a voucher, do not score differently from their matched public school Latino/a peers. White students experience consistent losses across all years post-baseline in mathematics and the first two years in ELA. The results in math are also similar across several other subgroups of students, except for students classified as ELLs or special education at baseline. The consistency of findings across most student subgroups raises questions about the mechanisms that may explain these negative effects in mathematics, such as the mathematics curriculum, instruction, or teacher quality in private schools not being as robust as is found in public schools.

In investigating how voucher effects may differ across types of private schools, we found negative effects in mathematics for both Catholic and other private schools as well as even greater negative effects for other private schools in both math and ELA

achievement. These mathematics findings for Catholic and other private schools mirror those we found in previous work on student transfers from public to Catholic and other private schools in Indianapolis (see Berends & Waddington, 2018). This is a relevant comparison as it takes place in the same state, includes a handful of the same students, and the mechanism of switching from public to private schools is the same. Further research should explore the possible variability of impacts between Catholic and other private schools as school-average effects in both subjects are highly variable between schools. Some schools were more racially and ethnically diverse prior to the implementation of the voucher program, and therefore may have been better equipped to educate a demographically (and perhaps, academically) diverse group of students.

Our research has its limitations. Although our use of exact matching is a strong methodological approach to examine impacts with longitudinal data and is based on prior within-study comparisons, it has drawbacks as described earlier in this paper. We only drew generalizations about students using vouchers to switch from public to private schools. Our modeling strategy aligns well with the original intent of the voucher program—to increase access to private schools for low-income public school families—to estimate the program's effects. However, after the law changed prior to the 2013/2014 school year, which no longer required voucher students to move from a public to private school, over half of all students participating in the voucher program in 2014/2015 never attended an Indiana public school (Indiana Department of Education, 2018). For these students, we would find it challenging to establish an equivalent baseline and assess meaningful voucher effects. We also found it challenging to estimate effects for non-low-income voucher recipients (e.g., those receiving a "half" voucher) as we did not have a fine-grained measure of income to identify comparable public students who would be eligible.

Second, Indiana does not have a common assessment system in the pre-K through second grade levels in public and private schools. Because we used third, fourth, or fifth grade as a baseline for most students, our research focuses on voucher program effects in the upper elementary and middle school grades. In 2014/2015, nearly 50 percent of the students receiving vouchers statewide were in the K-4 grade levels (Indiana Department of Education, 2018), meaning that current ISTEP+ testing does not capture a significant number of students receiving vouchers. As a result, we may never know whether the ICSP had a significant impact (positive or negative) on students in earlier grade levels.

Voucher programs are designed to provide new learning opportunities, for which achievement gains should serve as a proxy for any program's success for students and schools. Our results do not provide robust support that the ICSP has been successful to date at improving student achievement for low-income students who use a voucher to switch from a public to a private school. Although academic achievement outcomes are important for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to consider, parents make schooling decisions for their children based on a multitude of factors, including academics, location, safety, and religion. Therefore, researchers need to examine outcomes beyond test scores (e.g., educational attainment, engagement, social and emotional learning, character, civic participation, and other nonacademic outcomes). Additional data on these other student outcomes need to be collected and analyzed to provide a more complete picture. In an era of expanding school choice, policymakers must draw from recent findings about statewide voucher programs that there is more to learn about the impacts of large-scale parental choice programs on American families.

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Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?[†]

By ATILA ABDULKADIROĞLU, PARAG A. PATHAK, AND CHRISTOPHER R. WALTERS*

A central argument for school choice is that parents can choose schools wisely. This principle may underlie why lottery-based school evaluations have almost always reported positive or zero achievement effects. This paper reports on a striking counterexample to these results. We use randomized lotteries to evaluate the Louisiana Scholarship Program, a voucher plan that provides public funds for disadvantaged students to attend private schools. LSP participation lowers math scores by 0.4 standard deviations and also reduces achievement in reading, science, and social studies. These effects may be due in part to selection of low-quality private schools into the program. (JEL H75, I21, I22, I28)

The benefits and costs of increasing school choice in the United States education system are a matter of continuing debate. Choice advocates believe that increasing choice forces schools to compete for students, thereby boosting educational quality and promoting better matches between students and schools (Friedman 1962; Hoxby 2003). Proponents also cite surveys indicating that families are happier expressing choice, pointing to economic revealed preference considerations as a rationale for choice (Howell and Peterson 2002). The additional freedom to choose may be the reason that numerous lottery-based studies of school choice, possible only at schools where demand exceeds capacity, have found either positive or zero effects of choice programs on student achievement. For instance, charter school lottery studies have found some charters increase achievement markedly; impacts averaged over representative samples of charter schools are smaller but rarely negative (Abdulkadiroğlu et al. 2011; Angrist, Pathak, and Walters 2013; Dobbie and

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Fryer 2013; Chabrier, Cohodes, and Oreopoulos 2016).¹ Analyses of district-wide school choice plans show that attending a preferred public school yields limited test score impacts while improving college quality (Cullen, Jacob, and Levitt 2006; Hastings, Kane, and Staiger 2009; Deming et al. 2014). Randomized evaluations of voucher plans in New York, Washington D.C., and Dayton, Ohio show small average test score effects, with larger gains for some subgroups (Howell and Peterson 2002; Mayer et al. 2002; Howell et al. 2002; Krueger and Zhu 2004; Wolf et al. 2007, 2010). Together, these findings suggest that school choice programs generally produce zero or positive effects for participating students and almost never reduce student achievement.

This paper provides a striking contrast to the literature on lottery-based studies of school choice. We evaluate the Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP), a school choice program that provides private school vouchers for disadvantaged Louisiana students attending low-performing public schools. Income-eligible students enrolled in public schools graded “C” or below on an achievement-based rating system may apply for an LSP voucher to cover tuition at an eligible private school. Private schools gain eligibility by applying to the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to host LSP students (Louisiana Department of Education 2015a). If the number of eligible applicants to a private school exceeds the available seats, LSP vouchers are distributed via stratified random lottery. We estimate causal effects of LSP vouchers by comparing outcomes for lottery winners and losers in 2013, the first year after the LSP expanded throughout Louisiana.

Lottery-based estimates show that LSP vouchers dramatically reduce academic achievement. Attending an LSP-eligible private school lowers math scores by an average of 0.41 standard deviations (σ) and reduces reading, science, and social studies scores by 0.08σ , 0.26σ , and 0.33σ one year after the lottery. LSP participation shifts the distribution of scores downward in all four subjects, increasing the likelihood of a failing score by between 24 and 50 percent. These impacts are similar across family income levels and geographic locations. LSP voucher effects are more negative in earlier grades, though vouchers reduce achievement in later grades as well.

We find suggestive evidence that the negative effects of the LSP may be linked to selection of low-quality private schools into the program. LSP-eligible private schools charge lower tuition than nonparticipating schools, and the program’s negative math impacts are concentrated among the eligible schools with lowest tuition. Compared to nonparticipating schools, LSP-eligible private schools also experience sharp relative declines in enrollment prior to entering the program, though enrollment changes are unrelated to achievement effects among participants. We find no evidence for other candidate explanations for negative voucher impacts, including schools’ inexperience with the voucher-eligible population, transitional costs associated with the program’s statewide expansion, and the quality of fallback public schools available to LSP applicants. The LSP includes test-based accountability rules that aim to retrospectively identify and remove low-quality schools, but lottery

¹ An exception is Angrist, Pathak, and Walters (2013), a study that finds negative test score impacts for non-urban charter middle schools in Massachusetts.

estimates are similar for schools that were subsequently sanctioned for weak academic performance and for schools that were not sanctioned. This suggests that the program's accountability rules do not identify the low-quality schools that drive its negative achievement effects.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. The next section provides background on the Louisiana Scholarship Program and describes the data used to evaluate it. Section II outlines our empirical approach and reports lottery-based estimates of voucher effects. Section III documents the robustness of these estimates to adjustments for differential attrition between lottery winners and losers. Section IV explores mechanisms that might explain negative voucher impacts. Section V concludes.

I. Data and Background

A. The Louisiana Scholarship Program

School voucher programs are expanding quickly in the United States; the number of students using educational vouchers increased by 130 percent between 2009 and 2015 (Alliance for School Choice 2009, 2015). Paralleling this national trend, the Louisiana Scholarship Program launched in New Orleans in 2008. Legislation proposed by Governor Bobby Jindal authorized statewide expansion of the program in 2012, and it grew rapidly thereafter (Barrow 2012). This growth can be seen in Figure 1, which plots the numbers of LSP applicants, voucher recipients, and participating schools by year. Through the 2011–2012 school year the LSP awarded fewer than 2,000 vouchers annually for attendance at roughly 40 schools, mostly located in New Orleans. By 2014, 12,000 students applied for more than 6,000 LSP vouchers to attend 126 private schools, making the LSP the fifth-largest school voucher program in the United States (Louisiana Department of Education 2014a; Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice 2015).

Eligibility for LSP vouchers is limited to students from families earning below 250 percent of the federal poverty line. Applicants for grades 1 through 12 must also have attended public schools graded C, D, F, or T (turnaround) by the Louisiana School Performance Score (SPS) ratings system in the previous year. Rising kindergarteners have no previous school and so are exempt from this requirement. SPS ratings are based on a formula that combines test score levels, gains for low-achieving students, and (for high schools) graduation rates; most of the weight is placed on test score levels. In 2014, 54 percent of Louisiana Public Schools received SPS ratings low enough for enrolled students to qualify for LSP vouchers (Louisiana Department of Education 2015b).

Students apply for LSP vouchers to cover tuition at eligible private schools of their choice. LSP vouchers may also be used to attend public schools with SPS ratings of A or B, though few public schools participate in the program. An LSP voucher pays either the private school's tuition fee or the per pupil funding level of the student's home district, whichever is lower. LSP-eligible private schools typically charge less than public per pupil expenditure: in 2014, the average LSP voucher paid \$5,311, while students' sending districts spent \$8,605 (Louisiana Department of Education

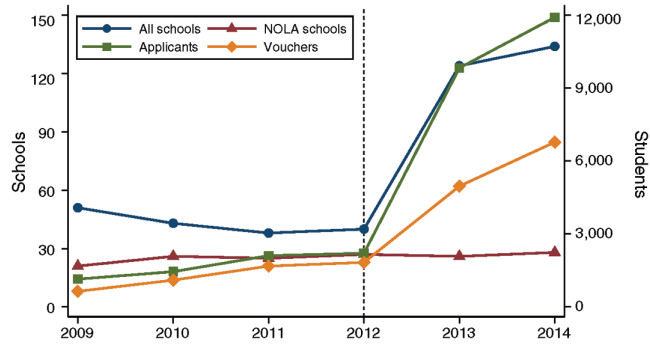


FIGURE 1. LOUISIANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

Notes: This figure plots the number of schools participating in the Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP; left axis) and the number of students applying for and receiving LSP vouchers (right axis). Circles indicate the total number of schools by year, and triangles show the number of schools in New Orleans. Squares display the number of applicants, and diamonds show the number of vouchers awarded. The vertical line indicates the 2011–2012 school year.

2014a). Private schools must accept the LSP voucher as full payment of tuition; charging “top-up” fees to LSP voucher recipients is prohibited.

Private schools become eligible to accept LSP voucher students by applying to the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The application requests a maximum number of LSP seats. BESE reviews applications through site visits, financial audits, and health and safety assessments. If an application is accepted, BESE authorizes a number of seats that may be fewer than the requested number. Schools with more LSP voucher applicants than authorized seats must give priority to students with enrolled siblings, students living nearby, and students previously enrolled in D- or F-rated public schools.² Students may list multiple schools on their LSP applications, and seats at a school are allocated in order of student preference rankings, then by admissions priorities. Ties among equal-priority students are broken by random lottery (Louisiana Department of Education 2015a).

To maintain eligibility, private schools must undergo annual financial audits and administer Louisiana state achievement tests to LSP students. Non-LSP students enrolled at participating schools are not required to take these tests. Schools with more than 40 total voucher students or 10 voucher students per grade receive a public Scholarship Cohort Index (SCI) score, an SPS-like rating based on voucher student achievement. Schools with SCI scores lower than 50 (equivalent to an F on the SPS scale) in the second year of participation or any subsequent year are not eligible to enroll new voucher students the next year, though the school may retain students already enrolled. Schools without enough students to qualify for an SCI score may also be barred from accepting new voucher students if less than 25 percent of their LSP enrollees earn “proficient” test scores. In 2013–2014, 28 private schools served

²Enrollees in the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD), continuing students in transitional grades, and transfers from ineligible private schools may also receive admission priority.

enough LSP students to receive SCI scores, and 15 were sanctioned for scores below 50. Eight additional schools were sanctioned for low proficiency rates (Louisiana Department of Education 2014a).

The LSP has generated controversy since its inception. In response to a 2012 lawsuit filed by Louisiana's teachers' unions, the state Supreme Court ruled that funds earmarked for public schools cannot constitutionally be used to fund the LSP. In response, the state legislature approved the use of funds not designated for public education (Dreilinger 2013b). In 2013, the US Department of Justice filed a lawsuit alleging that the program interferes with federal desegregation orders by altering school racial composition. This lawsuit resulted in the requirement that applicant schools fill out "Brumfield-Dodd" reports documenting compliance with desegregation orders (Dreilinger 2013c). LSP detractors cite persistently low test scores among voucher students, while supporters note that the LSP serves very disadvantaged students and receives high scores on surveys of parental satisfaction (Dreilinger 2013a; Varney 2014). The LSP is also relevant to more general debates over school vouchers, serving as an example for similar proposed programs in other states (Ardon and Candal 2015). The expansion of voucher programs nationwide seems likely to be high on the agenda of US Education Secretary Betsy DeVos (Brown 2016).

B. Data Sources

The Louisiana Department of Education provided data covering voucher applications, background characteristics, lottery outcomes, and test scores for all students applying to the LSP between 2008 and 2012. As shown in Figure 1, the program was not heavily oversubscribed prior to 2012. Our analysis therefore focuses on students applying for LSP vouchers in Fall 2012, the first application cohort after the program expanded statewide. Follow-up scores on Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP) or Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) achievement tests are available for students in grades three through eight.³ Primary outcomes are math, English Language Arts (ELA), science, and social studies LEAP and iLEAP scores in Spring 2013, the end of the academic year after LSP application. These scores are in standard deviation units, normed using means and standard deviations for students in the New Orleans Recovery School District (RSD) by grade and year.

The application data records students' rank-ordered choice lists of private schools, information for determining admission priorities, and voucher offers. We use this information to isolate random variation in voucher receipt. Vouchers are randomly assigned within "risk sets" defined by application year, grade, first-choice private school, and priority status. Our lottery analysis sample consists of first-time LSP voucher applicants for grades three through eight in 2012–2013, in risk sets in which some students were offered vouchers and others were not.

³LEAP exams are taken in fourth and eighth grade. iLEAP exams are taken in third, fifth, sixth, and seventh. The iLEAP includes items from nationally normed Iowa Tests of Basic Skills as well as items based on state testing criteria, while the LEAP includes only items based on state criteria.

TABLE 1—DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDENTS

	Louisiana Scholarship Program				
	Louisiana (1)	RSD (2)	All applicants (3)	Randomized applicants (4)	Enrollees (5)
Female	0.487	0.473	0.489	0.487	0.539
Black	0.451	0.939	0.861	0.885	0.805
Hispanic	0.044	0.031	0.031	0.033	0.039
White	0.468	0.010	0.086	0.058	0.131
NSECD	—	—	0.004	0.005	0.006
Household income: mean	—	—	15,471	15,535	17,400
25th percentile			1,300	1,455	1,452
Median			12,000	12,840	15,000
75th percentile			24,781	24,864	28,032
Observations	715,012	14,689	3,723	1,412	1,019

Notes: Columns 1 and 2 show statistics for students enrolled in Louisiana and Recovery School District (RSD) public schools in grades 3–8 in the 2012–2013 school year. These statistics are obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education website. Column 3 shows statistics for first-time applicants to Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) schools in grades 3–8 for 2012–2013. Column 4 shows statistics for LSP applicants subject to first choice random assignment. Column 5 shows statistics for LSP enrollees.

We supplement data on LSP applicants with private school characteristics obtained from the Private School Universe Survey (PSS), along with tuition information gathered via internet searches and phone calls. The PSS, a biennial census of US private schools, collects data on enrollment by demographic group as well as class size, instructional time, religious affiliation, and geographic location. We matched the 2000–2012 PSS waves to voucher lottery data by school name and city, manually correcting small discrepancies for a few inexact matches (e.g., missing hyphens or apostrophes). This procedure yielded matches for 142 of 159 schools that participated in the LSP between 2008 and 2013. We searched for tuition for all Louisiana private schools in the 2012 PSS and successfully collected data on 94 percent of LSP schools and 92 percent of non-LSP schools. The online Appendix provides further details on data processing and sample construction.

C. LSP Students and Schools

The LSP voucher applicant population is composed mostly of low-income minority students. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for first-time voucher applicants, applicants subject to random assignment, and enrollees in the 2012–2013 school year, as well as for students enrolled in Louisiana public schools and the RSD. Eighty-six percent of LSP applicants are black, compared to 45 percent in Louisiana and 94 percent in the RSD. LSP voucher applicants come from families earning \$15,471, on average. As shown in column 4, randomized LSP applicants are very similar to the full applicant population. Column 5 shows that students who use LSP vouchers are slightly less disadvantaged than LSP applicants. Eighty-one percent of voucher recipients are black, and average family income is \$17,389 for this group. These income levels are well below 250 percent of the poverty line, which

TABLE 2—DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

	All Louisiana private schools			Matched city sample		
	LSP voucher schools (1)	Oversubscribed LSP schools (2)	Other private schools (3)	LSP voucher schools (4)	Oversubscribed LSP schools (5)	Other private schools (6)
Enrollment in 2012	311	243	323	323	239	349
Enrollment growth, 2000–2012	–12.4%	–16.1%	2.8%	–7.7%	–10.4%	1.9%
Tuition	\$4,898	\$4,653	\$5,760	\$5,115	\$4,740	\$6,430
Fraction black	0.327	0.433	0.158	0.387	0.517	0.188
Fraction Hispanic	0.020	0.021	0.037	0.021	0.021	0.041
Fraction white	0.622	0.517	0.752	0.564	0.433	0.714
Catholic school	0.645	0.679	0.391	0.594	0.619	0.367
Other religious affiliation	0.274	0.304	0.421	0.313	0.357	0.430
Student/teacher ratio	13.5	12.7	11.5	13.3	12.3	10.9
Days in school year	178.6	178.9	177.9	178.8	178.9	177.7
Hours in school day	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.7
Observations	124	56	235	96	42	158

Notes: This table reports characteristics of private schools in Louisiana using data from the Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Column 1 shows statistics for schools eligible for Louisiana Scholarship Program vouchers at any time through 2012–2013. Column 2 shows statistics for voucher schools with applicants subject to random assignment in 2012–2013. Column 3 shows statistics for non-LSP private schools. Columns 4, 5, and 6 report statistics for schools in cities with both LSP and non-LSP private schools. The second row reports average enrollment growth between 2000 and 2012 for schools with available data in both years. The third row measures tuition in the most recent available year, usually 2015–2016. Tuition is available for 94 percent of voucher schools and 92 percent of other private schools.

is the limit for LSP eligibility (i.e., \$37,825 for a family of two and \$57,625 for a family of four in 2012; see Department of Health and Human Services 2012).

Private schools participating in the LSP differ systematically from other Louisiana private schools. This can be seen in Table 2, which compares characteristics of LSP private schools versus other private schools in the state. LSP schools open in both 2000 and 2012 experienced an average enrollment loss of 13 percent over this time period, while other private schools grew 3 percent on average. LSP schools also charge lower prices: average tuition is \$4,898 for LSP schools and \$5,760 for non-LSP schools, a difference of roughly 15 percent. Most Louisiana private schools are associated with religious groups, but LSP schools are more likely to be affiliated with the Catholic church than other schools. LSP schools also serve more black students and have larger student/teacher ratios than do non-LSP schools. Instructional time per day and per year is comparable for these two groups.

Column 2 of Table 2 describes LSP schools that were oversubscribed and therefore admitted students by random lottery in Fall 2012. These schools are the basis for our analysis of LSP voucher effects. Oversubscribed schools are smaller and serve more black students than other LSP schools, but are otherwise generally similar. Columns 4 through 6 report corresponding statistics for schools in cities with at least one LSP school and one non-LSP school. Characteristics in this matched-city sample are similar to the broader sample in columns 1 through 3, suggesting that differences between LSP and non-LSP schools are not explained by geographic differences in private school markets.

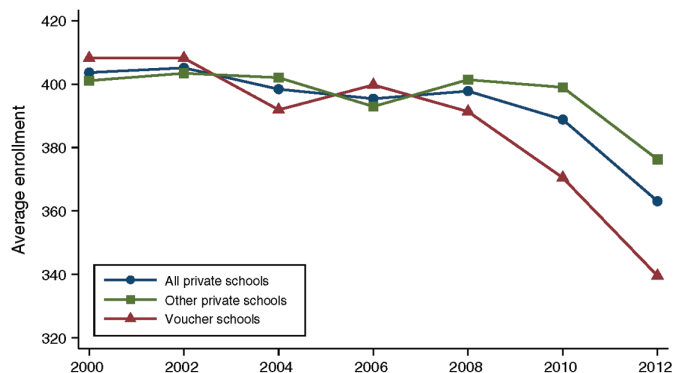


FIGURE 2. ENROLLMENT TRENDS IN LOUISIANA PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Notes: This figure plots average annual enrollment for private schools in Louisiana. Enrollment is measured using the Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Voucher schools are defined as schools eligible for the Louisiana Scholarship Program at any time through 2013–2014. Schools are included if they have available PSS data in both 2000 and 2012, which covers 93 of 159 voucher schools.

Figure 2 presents a more complete investigation of enrollment trends by plotting average annual enrollment for a balanced panel of private schools open in both 2000 and 2012. Schools are permanently categorized as LSP for this analysis if they received an LSP voucher student at any time through 2013–2014. The resulting sample covers 93 of the 159 schools that ever participated in the LSP. In 2000, enrollment levels were slightly higher in schools that eventually opted in to the voucher program than for other private schools. Mean enrollment began to decline for LSP schools around 2006, while enrollment was roughly constant for other schools until 2010. Both groups' enrollment fell after 2010, but this decline was sharper among LSP schools. As a result, LSP schools were roughly 10 percent smaller than non-LSP schools by the time the voucher program expanded statewide in 2012–2013.

II. Lottery Estimates of Voucher Effects

A. Empirical Framework

The primary equation of interest for our empirical analysis is

$$(1) \quad Y_i = \beta P_i + \sum_{\ell} \gamma_{\ell} d_{i\ell} + \mathbf{X}_i' \delta + \epsilon_i,$$

where Y_i is a test score for student i , and P_i is an indicator equal to one if this student uses an LSP voucher to attend a private school. The $d_{i\ell}$ are a mutually exclusive and exhaustive set of lottery risk set dummies indicating combinations of first-choice school and priority status. The term \mathbf{X}_i is a vector of baseline covariates (gender, race, NSECD status, and family income quartiles) included to increase precision.

Decisions to participate in the LSP may be related to potential academic achievement, so ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation of equation (1) may not recover causal effects of voucher use. We therefore employ a lottery-based instrumental variables (IV) strategy to estimate voucher effects. Let Z_i denote an indicator equal to one if student i was offered an LSP voucher. We estimate equation (1) by two-stage least squares (2SLS), with first-stage equation

$$(2) \quad P_i = \pi Z_i + \sum_{\ell} \rho_{\ell} d_{i\ell} + \mathbf{X}_i' \theta + \eta_i.$$

Two-stage least squares estimates are obtained via OLS estimation of (1) after substituting \hat{P}_i , the predicted value from (2), for P_i . The voucher offer instrument Z_i is randomly assigned within risk sets and therefore independent of family background and other determinants of potential achievement. Assuming that voucher offers only influence test scores through LSP participation and weakly increase the likelihood of participation for all students, the 2SLS estimate of β may be interpreted as a local average treatment effect (LATE), that is, an average causal effect of participation for “compliers” induced to attend private schools by LSP vouchers (Imbens and Angrist 1994; Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996).

B. Covariate Balance

Within lottery risk sets, students offered LSP vouchers should look much like students not offered vouchers. Table 3 presents a check on this by comparing baseline characteristics for voucher lottery winners and losers. These calculations are restricted to our lottery analysis sample, which includes 1,412 first-time applicants for grades three through eight in risk sets subject to random assignment in Fall 2012. Column 1 displays mean characteristics for lottery losers, while column 2 reports coefficients from regressions of baseline variables on the voucher offer indicator Z_i , controlling for risk set indicators. Column 3 shows corresponding coefficients for the 88 percent of applicants with follow-up test score data. Demographic characteristics and income distributions are similar for lottery winners and losers, indicating that random assignment was successful. Mean differences for individual characteristics are small, and p -values for joint tests of balance across all baseline characteristics give no cause for concern.

C. IV Estimates

Lottery estimates show that LSP vouchers reduce academic achievement. Table 4 reports results for Spring 2013 math, ELA, science, and social studies LEAP/iLEAP scores. As shown in column 1, lottery offers boost the probability of voucher use by 68 percentage points in the subsequent year. This estimate corresponds to the first-stage coefficient π in equation (2). Column 2 shows reduced form differences in test scores between lottery winners and losers, obtained by substituting Y_i for P_i on the left-hand side of (2). Voucher lottery losers outscore winners by 0.28σ in math, 0.06σ in ELA, 0.18σ in science, and 0.23σ in social studies.

TABLE 3—COVARIATE BALANCE

	Non-offered mean (1)	Offer differential	
		Full sample (2)	With follow-up (3)
Female	0.474	0.012 (0.033)	0.008 (0.035)
Black	0.900	-0.034 (0.021)	-0.028 (0.022)
Hispanic	0.030	0.003 (0.012)	0.001 (0.013)
White	0.050	0.019 (0.015)	0.018 (0.016)
NSECD	0.004	-0.001 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)
Household income	15,410	1,636 (1,097)	1,025 (1,118)
Income below p_{25}	0.254	-0.007 (0.029)	0.000 (0.030)
Income below p_{50}	0.503	-0.030 (0.035)	-0.017 (0.036)
Income below p_{75}	0.753	-0.048 (0.034)	-0.028 (0.035)
Joint p -value	—	0.659	0.932
Observations		1,412	1,248

Notes: This table compares characteristics of offered and non-offered applicants to Louisiana Scholarship Program schools for grades 3–8 in the 2012–2013 school year. The sample is restricted to first-time applicants subject to first choice random assignment. Column 1 reports mean characteristics for applicants not offered a seat, while columns 2 and 3 report differences between offered and non-offered applicants. These differences come from regressions that control for risk set indicators. The sample in column 3 is restricted to applicants with follow-up test scores. p_{25} , p_{50} , and p_{75} refer to the twenty-fifth, fiftieth, and seventy-fifth percentiles of household income in the non-offered group. The last row shows p -values from tests that all differentials equal zero. Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

Because the IV models estimated here are just-identified, 2SLS estimates of β in equation (1) equal ratios of corresponding reduced-form and first-stage estimates. These estimates appear in column 3. The 2SLS coefficients show that LSP participation lowers math scores by 0.41σ one year after the lottery and reduces ELA, science, and social studies scores by 0.08σ , 0.26σ , and 0.33σ , respectively. Estimates for math, science, and social studies are highly statistically significant, though the estimate for ELA is insignificant at conventional levels. Here and elsewhere, standard errors are clustered by risk set.⁴ Column 4 shows corresponding OLS estimates. OLS and 2SLS estimates are very similar, suggesting little selection into voucher use within lottery risk sets. The OLS estimates are negative and statistically significant in all four subjects.

Together, the estimates in Table 4 clearly demonstrate that attending LSP-eligible private schools reduces voucher recipients' test scores. It's worth benchmarking

⁴Clustering by risk set accounts for negative dependence between voucher offers for students in the same lottery. With a fixed number of offers available, an offer for one student reduces the likelihood of offers for other students in the same risk set.

TABLE 4—TWO-STAGE LEAST SQUARES ESTIMATES OF VOUCHER EFFECTS ON TEST SCORES

Subject	First stage (1)	Reduced form (2)	2SLS (3)	OLS (4)
Math	0.679 (0.029)	-0.281 (0.061)	-0.413 (0.091)	-0.386 (0.066)
Observations			1,247	
ELA	0.679 (0.029)	-0.055 (0.053)	-0.081 (0.079)	-0.120 (0.056)
Observations			1,248	
Science	0.689 (0.030)	-0.181 (0.066)	-0.263 (0.095)	-0.282 (0.065)
Observations			1,221	
Social studies	0.690 (0.030)	-0.229 (0.060)	-0.331 (0.089)	-0.270 (0.059)
Observations			1,220	

Notes: This table reports estimates of the effects of attendance at Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) voucher schools on LEAP/iLEAP test scores. The sample includes first-time voucher applicants subject to first choice random assignment applying to grades 3–8 in 2012–2013. Column 1 reports first-stage effects of voucher offers on attendance at an LSP school, while column 2 reports reduced form effects of offers on test scores. Column 3 reports two-stage least squares estimates of the effects of LSP participation, and column 4 reports corresponding ordinary least squares estimates. All models control for risk set indicators and baseline demographics (sex, race, NSECD, and indicators for household income quartiles). Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

these effect sizes against the impacts of important educational interventions evaluated in the recent literature. Rouse (1998) estimates that participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program boosts math scores by 0.08–0.12 σ per year. Evidence from the Tennessee STAR experiment indicates that cutting class size by one third increases achievement by roughly 0.2 σ (Krueger 1999; Chetty et al. 2011), while estimated standard deviations of achievement impacts across teachers and schools range from 0.1–0.2 σ (Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff 2014a; Angrist et al. 2017). Studies of effective charter schools show annual score gains between 0.2 σ and 0.4 σ (Abdulkadiroğlu et al. 2011; Dobbie and Fryer 2011; Angrist et al. 2012; Curto and Fryer 2014). The negative impacts of LSP vouchers, on the order of 0.3–0.4 σ in math, science, and social studies, are therefore comparable in magnitude to some of the largest effects documented in recent studies of education programs.

D. Effects on Performance Categories

Louisiana’s educational accountability system groups LEAP and iLEAP scores into five performance categories: Unsatisfactory, Approaching Basic, Basic, Mastery, or Advanced. These categorizations carry high stakes for both students and schools. Fourth and eighth grade students must score Approaching Basic or above in math and ELA, and Basic or above in at least one subject, to be promoted to the next grade (Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education 2015). The SPS school rating system awards points for each student scoring at least Basic; scores below Basic are considered failures and awarded no points (Louisiana Department of Education 2015b).

TABLE 5—VOUCHER EFFECTS ON TEST SCORE PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES

Subject	Approaching basic or above (1)	Basic or above (2)	Mastery or above (3)	Advanced (4)
Math	−0.156 (0.045)	−0.216 (0.047)	−0.067 (0.024)	−0.012 (0.011)
CCM	[0.802]	[0.567]	[0.090]	[0.017]
Observations			1,214	
ELA	−0.022 (0.034)	−0.107 (0.047)	−0.032 (0.031)	0.002 (0.011)
CCM	[0.844]	[0.563]	[0.100]	[0.009]
Observations			1,222	
Science	−0.035 (0.047)	−0.153 (0.049)	−0.040 (0.018)	−0.001 (0.004)
CCM	[0.810]	[0.468]	[0.062]	[0.003]
Observations			1,211	
Social studies	−0.096 (0.041)	−0.160 (0.045)	−0.026 (0.020)	−0.004 (0.003)
CCM	[0.759]	[0.513]	[0.044]	[0.004]
Observations			1,209	
Qualify for promotion (4th and 8th grade)		−0.284 (0.086)		
CCM		[0.786]		
Observations			347	

Notes: This table reports 2SLS estimates of how attendance at Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) schools affects LEAP/iLEAP score categories. The dependent variable in each column is an indicator for scoring in the relevant performance category or higher. The last row shows effects on passing LEAP exams for fourth and eighth graders. Passing requires scores of Approaching Basic or above in math and ELA and Basic or above in at least one subject. See notes to Table 4 for a description of the 2SLS model specification. Control complier means (CCM); mean outcomes for non-offered compliers are shown in brackets. Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

We investigate LSP vouchers' effects on high-stakes performance categories in Table 5. Specifically, this table reports 2SLS estimates of equation (1) for a series of outcomes equal to one if a student scores at or above each performance category. To benchmark these effects, we also report control complier means (CCMs), which are average non-LSP outcomes for voucher lottery compliers. Appendix A provides the details of CCM estimation and other methods for characterizing compliers employed in the analysis to follow.

LSP vouchers shift students into lower performance categories and increase the likelihood of failing scores. Attending an LSP-eligible private school reduces the probability of scoring at least Approaching Basic in math by 16 percentage points from a base of 80 percentage points, a result that can be seen in column 1 of Table 5. This implies an 80 percent increase in Unsatisfactory math scores (16 points on a base of 20). Vouchers also increase the probabilities of Unsatisfactory scores in the other three subjects, though these effects are smaller in magnitude. Column 2 shows that voucher use substantially boosts the likelihood of failing tests in every subject: impacts on the probability of scoring at least Basic are negative and statistically

significant for all four tests. LSP participation reduces the probability that compliers earn passing math scores by 21.6 percentage points from a base of 56.7, implying a 50 percent increase in failures (21.6/43.3). Corresponding increases for ELA, science, and social studies are 24, 29, and 33 percent, respectively.

Effects on higher performance categories are smaller in absolute magnitude, but some imply large proportionate impacts. As shown in column 3, vouchers cut the probability of qualifying for Mastery or above in math by 6.7 percentage points from a base of 9.0, a 74 percent reduction. The corresponding decrease in science is 65 percent (4.0/6.2). Fewer than 2 percent of compliers earn Advanced scores in each subject, and impacts on this category are small.

The bottom row of Table 5 looks specifically at the effects of LSP participation on the probability that fourth and eighth grade students earn LEAP scores sufficient for grade promotion in the public school accountability system. The outcome here is an indicator equal to one if a student scores at least Approaching Basic in both math and ELA, and Basic or above in at least one subject. LSP participation more than doubles the likelihood that students fail to qualify for grade promotion. Voucher use reduces the probability of passing by 28.4 percentage points from a base of 78.6, implying a 133-percent increase in failures (28.4/21.4). Private schools are not required to promote or retain students on the basis of state achievement test scores, of course, but this result shows that LSP vouchers have substantial effects on an outcome used for high-stakes decisions elsewhere.

E. Effects on Score Distributions

To develop a more complete picture of LSP vouchers' distributional effects, we estimate marginal test score densities for compliers lotteried into the program and compliers who did not receive LSP vouchers. Let $Y_i(1)$ and $Y_i(0)$ denote potential scores for student i as a function of the LSP participation "treatment" P_i . We characterize distributions of these potential outcomes by estimating equations of the form

$$(3) \quad \frac{1}{h} K\left(\frac{Y_i - y}{h}\right) \times P_i = \tau_y P_i + \sum_{\ell} \kappa_{\ell y} d_{i\ell} + \mathbf{X}'_i \lambda_y + v_{iy},$$

instrumenting P_i with the voucher offer indicator Z_i as before. Here, $K(u)$ is a symmetric kernel function maximized at $u = 0$, and h is a bandwidth. Under standard regularity conditions, the 2SLS estimate of τ_y is a consistent estimate of the density function of $Y_i(1)$ for voucher lottery compliers evaluated at y (Angrist et al. 2016; Walters 2014). Estimates of the density of $Y_i(0)$ for compliers are obtained by substituting $(1 - P_i)$ for P_i on both sides of (3). Our implementation evaluates complier densities at a grid of 100 points using a Gaussian kernel and Silverman's (1986) rule-of-thumb bandwidth.

Figure 3 reveals that LSP participation shifts the entire achievement distribution downward for all four subjects. This results in lower treated densities at high test score levels and higher treated densities at low levels relative to distributions for non-treated compliers lotteried out of the program. Figure 3 also reports Kolmogorov-Smirnov test statistics equal to maximum differences in estimated complier CDFs,

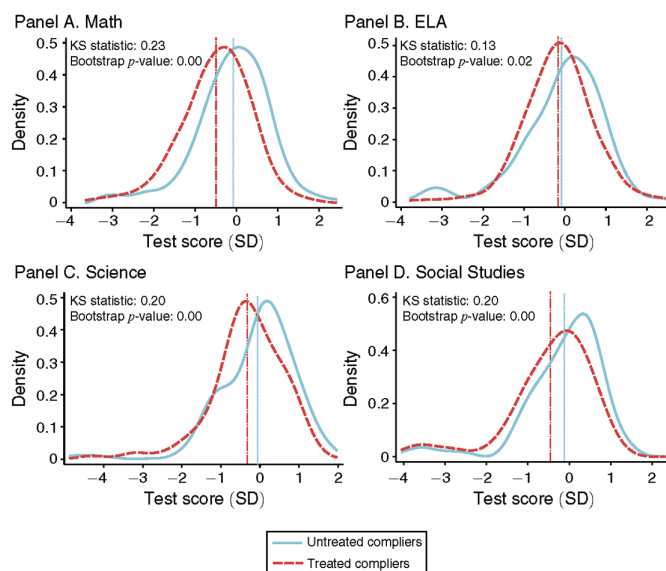


FIGURE 3. TEST SCORE DISTRIBUTIONS FOR VOUCHER COMPLIERS

Notes: This figure plots marginal potential test score distributions for Louisiana Scholarship Program voucher lottery compliers. Treated densities are estimated using 2SLS regressions of the interaction of a kernel density function and an LSP participation indicator on the participation indicator, instrumented by a random offer indicator and controlling for risk set dummies and baseline demographics. Untreated densities are estimated by replacing participation with one minus participation in this 2SLS procedure. All models use a Gaussian kernel and the Silverman (1986) rule of thumb bandwidth. Vertical dotted lines indicate mean untreated outcomes, and dashed/dotted lines indicate mean treated outcomes. KS statistics are maximum differences in complier CDFs. The bootstrap procedure used to test distributional equality is described in the Appendix.

along with bootstrap p -values from tests of distributional equality (see Appendix A), which result in rejections of distributional equality at conventional levels for all four subjects ($p \leq 0.02$).

F. Effects on Subgroups

Previous studies of voucher programs and Catholic private schools have emphasized effect heterogeneity across demographic groups, particularly by race (Neal 1997; Howell and Peterson 2002). Because 86 percent of LSP applicants are black, there is insufficient power to split our sample by race. We instead investigate heterogeneity by family income and location, which may capture differences in resources and schooling opportunities. Columns 1 and 2 of Table 6 report estimates from 2SLS models that interact LSP participation with family income and add the interaction of income with the lottery offer as a second instrument, controlling for a main effect of income. The income interaction is insignificant in all subjects,

TABLE 6—VOUCHER EFFECTS BY SUBGROUP

Subject	By family income (\$1,000s)		By location		By Catholic affiliation		By grade	
	Main effect (1)	Interaction (2)	New Orleans/ Baton Rouge (3)	Other (4)	Catholic (5)	Not Catholic (6)	3rd–5th (7)	6th–8th (8)
Math	-0.413 (0.093)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.276 (0.284)	-0.436 (0.095)	-0.462 (0.144)	-0.286 (0.104)	-0.631 (0.140)	-0.207 (0.110)
Observations	1,247		133	1,114	643	471	664	583
<i>p</i> -value	0.636		0.593		0.319		0.016	
ELA	-0.078 (0.082)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.034 (0.259)	-0.086 (0.083)	-0.090 (0.119)	-0.034 (0.121)	-0.301 (0.119)	0.135 (0.080)
Observations	1,248		133	1,115	643	472	664	584
<i>p</i> -value	0.787		0.847		0.747		0.002	
Science	-0.266 (0.096)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.412 (0.298)	-0.242 (0.099)	-0.222 (0.135)	-0.238 (0.148)	-0.396 (0.119)	-0.132 (0.137)
Observations	1,221		132	1,089	630	463	656	565
<i>p</i> -value	0.708		0.588		0.936		0.145	
Social studies	-0.338 (0.091)	0.003 (0.005)	-0.542 (0.268)	-0.301 (0.092)	-0.470 (0.135)	-0.105 (0.106)	-0.387 (0.131)	-0.276 (0.122)
Observations	1,220		132	1,088	629	463	656	564
<i>p</i> -value	0.473		0.394		0.035		0.542	

Notes: This table reports estimates from 2SLS models that interact Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) participation with observed student and school characteristics. Columns 1 and 2 interact LSP participation with family income. Income is demeaned in the estimation sample, so that main effects are at the mean. Column 3 shows effects for students in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, while column 4 shows effects for students in other places. Columns 5 and 6 report effects for Catholic schools and schools with other or no religious affiliation. Column 7 shows effects for students applying in third through fifth grade, while column 8 shows effects for students applying in sixth through eighth. See notes to Table 4 for a description of the 2SLS model specification. *p*-values are from tests of the hypothesis that interaction effects or subgroup differences are zero. Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

implying similar effects for richer and poorer students. Columns 3 and 4 compare effects for students in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana's two largest urban centers, or elsewhere. These estimates show similar effects for urban centers and other locations, though estimates for New Orleans and Baton Rouge are imprecise due to small samples.

A large literature evaluates the effects of Catholic private schools on student outcomes (Neal 1997; Altonji, Elder, and Taber 2005). Columns 5 and 6 of Table 6 report LSP voucher impacts by Catholic affiliation. Effects are similar for Catholic and non-Catholic schools. The estimated effect for social studies is more negative for Catholic schools, but this difference is only marginally significant and may be a chance finding given the large number of splits examined. These estimates indicate that Catholic LSP schools do not improve test scores for voucher applicants.

Columns 7 and 8 of Table 6 report effects by grade, which are relevant for understanding LSP vouchers' effects on human capital accumulation. Results here suggest that impacts of LSP participation are more negative for younger children. Students in grades three through five lose 0.62σ in math, an effect three times as large as the loss for students in grades six through eight (0.21σ). Similarly, vouchers reduce

TABLE 7—ROBUSTNESS TO ADJUSTMENTS FOR DIFFERENTIAL ATTRITION

Subject	Full sample			Without imbalanced risk sets			Bounds	
	Non-offered follow-up rate (1)	Offer differential (2)	2SLS estimate (3)	Non-offered follow-up rate (4)	Offer differential (5)	2SLS estimate (6)	Lower bound (7)	Upper bound (8)
Math	0.856	0.079 (0.015)	-0.413 (0.091)	0.908	0.017 (0.013)	-0.397 (0.099)	-0.494 (0.091)	-0.178 (0.091)
Observations		1,412	1,247		1,059	962	1,412	
ELA	0.857	0.078 (0.015)	-0.081 (0.079)	0.905	0.019 (0.013)	-0.098 (0.095)	-0.208 (0.080)	0.101 (0.087)
Observations		1,412	1,248		1,059	958	1,412	
Science	0.836	0.078 (0.016)	-0.263 (0.095)	0.890	0.006 (0.015)	-0.272 (0.104)	-0.362 (0.096)	-0.016 (0.097)
Observations		1,412	1,220		1,059	942	1,412	
Social studies	0.835	0.079 (0.016)	-0.331 (0.089)	0.888	0.008 (0.015)	-0.362 (0.112)	-0.404 (0.104)	-0.032 (0.102)
Observations		1,412	1,221		1,059	941	1,412	

Notes: This table explores the robustness of estimated voucher effects to adjustments for differential attrition between offered and non-offered students. Column 1 shows the fraction of non-offered applicants with follow-up test scores. Column 2 shows coefficients from regressions of a follow-up indicator on an offer indicator, controlling for sex, race, NSECD status, income quartiles, and risk set dummies. Column 3 shows the full-sample 2SLS estimates from Table 4. Columns 4 through 6 order the sample by risk-set specific attrition differentials and drop the 25 percent of students from risk sets with the largest differentials. Column 4 shows follow-up rates in the trimmed sample, column 5 shows offered/non-offered attrition differentials, and column 6 shows 2SLS estimates. Columns 7 and 8 report nonparametric bounds on local average treatment effects of LSP participation, estimated via the method described in the Appendix. Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

ELA scores by 0.3σ for younger children, while the ELA estimate for older children is positive and marginally significant. These cross-grade differences are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < 0.02$). Estimates of science and social studies effects are also more negative for younger applicants, though the differences for these subjects are not statistically significant.

III. Attrition

Even when LSP vouchers are randomly assigned, non-random attrition from the sample may compromise the comparability of lottery winners and losers, possibly generating selection bias. Column 1 of Table 7 shows high follow-up rates for the lottery sample: test scores in each subject are observed for at least 83 percent of lottery losers. As shown in column 2, however, follow-up scores are more likely to be observed for lottery winners than for losers. Specifically, the probability of an observed score is 8 percentage points higher for lottery winners, conditional on risk sets and baseline demographics. This difference is likely due to the fact that LSP participants are tested for accountability purposes, while non-participants who exit the public school system are not followed.

The differential attrition process would have to be extremely pathological to explain the large negative estimates reported in Table 4. For example, if all students

without test scores among those offered vouchers scored at the eighty-fifth percentile of the offered distribution and all those missing scores from the non-offered group scored at the fifteenth percentile of the non-offered distribution, the reduced-form estimate for math would equal -0.12σ with a standard error of 0.05σ , a statistically significant effect. The math reduced form would be approximately zero if missing offered students scored at the ninety-fifth percentile and non-offered students scored at the fifth percentile of their respective distributions. This degree of imbalance seems very implausible in view of column 3 of Table 3, which shows that observed characteristics remain balanced in the sample of students with followup scores. Nonetheless, we cannot be assured of balance on unobserved characteristics.

We conduct two additional analyses to formally assess the robustness of our results to selective attrition. The first drops lottery risk sets with large attrition differentials and reports estimates for the remaining sample. The second constructs nonparametric bounds on local average treatment effects under a monotonicity assumption on the attrition process. The latter approach is in the spirit of Lee (2009), who derives sharp bounds on treatment effects in randomized experiments with monotonicity. Engberg et al. (2014) apply similar methods in a lottery-based research design with imperfect compliance, an approach we follow here. Intuitively, if a voucher offer weakly reduces the likelihood of attrition for all students, the usual LATE framework must be augmented with an additional set of “at risk” compliers who exit the sample when denied an offer. This prevents identification of the mean treated outcome for the subgroup of compliers who remain in the sample, but this mean can be bounded using observed response probabilities and quantiles of the outcome distribution. Appendix B formalizes this argument and details the methods we use to construct bounds for LATE.

Adjustments for differential attrition do not overturn the conclusion that LSP participation reduces achievement. Columns 4 through 6 of Table 7 report results after dropping risk sets with the largest attrition differentials. This trimmed sample is constructed by computing risk set-specific differential attrition rates, ordering students according to the rate for their risk set, and dropping the 25 percent of students with the largest differentials. Column 4 shows that follow-up rates in the remaining sample are roughly 90 percent, and column 5 shows that differences in attrition between lottery winners and losers are small enough to be no longer statistically significant. As can be seen in column 6, 2SLS estimates of voucher effects are essentially unchanged by the trimming procedure. Combined with the observation that baseline characteristics remain balanced in the sample with follow-up scores, these results suggest that the attrition process is not very selective. Our full sample lottery estimates are therefore unlikely to be compromised by attrition.

Columns 7 and 8 display estimated bounds on local average treatment effects for compliers. These bounds are relatively wide because of the large difference in attrition rates between lottery winners and losers. Upper bounds for math, science, and social studies are negative, however, and the associated confidence intervals rule out small positive effects. The estimated upper bound for math is -0.18σ , and this estimate is statistically significant at the five-percent level. The conclusion that LSP vouchers reduce math scores is therefore robust to this conservative adjustment for differential attrition.

TABLE 8—VOUCHER EFFECTS AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Program	Study (1)	Math effect (2)	Funding (3)	Eligibility (4)	Voucher amount (5)	Top-up allowed (6)	Schools opt in (7)	Religious schools (8)
Louisiana Scholarship Program (LA)	Authors' estimates	-0.41σ	Public	Income $< 2.5 \times$ FPL, low-performing school	Min. of tuition and public PPE	No	Yes	Yes
DC opportunity Scholarship Program (Washington, DC)	Wolf et al. (2007)	$0.13\sigma^a$	Public	Income $< 1.85 \times$ FPL	Min. of tuition and \$7,500 (2004)	Yes ^b	Yes	Yes
Parents Advancing Choice in Education (Dayton, OH)	Howell et al. (2002)	$0.08\sigma^c$	Private	Income $< 2 \times$ FPL	Min. of $0.6 \times$ tuition and \$1,200 (1998)	Yes	No	Yes
School Choice Scholarships Foundation (New York, NY)	Howell et al. (2002)	$0.08\sigma^c$	Private	Income $< 1.3 \times$ FPL	\$1,400 (1997)	Yes	No	Yes
Washington Scholarship Fund (Washington, DC)	Howell et al. (2002)	$-0.02\sigma^c$	Private	Income $< 2.7 \times$ FPL	Min. of $0.6 \times$ tuition and \$1,700 (1998)	Yes	No	Yes
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (Milwaukee, WI)	Rouse (1998)	$0.12\sigma^d$	Public	Income $< 1.75 \times$ FPL	Public PPE ^e	No ^e	Yes	No ^e

Notes: This table compares school voucher programs' characteristics and achievement effects. Column 1 lists the article evaluating each program, and column 2 reports estimated effects on first-year math achievement in standard deviation units. Estimates from studies that report intent-to-treat (ITT) estimates are rescaled by first-stage effects on private school participation. Column 3 indicates whether a program is publicly or privately funded. Column 4 lists eligibility criteria, with income limits reported as a fraction of the federal poverty line (FPL). Column 5 reports the maximum amount of the voucher at the time of the evaluation. PPE refers to per pupil expenditure. Column 6 indicates whether a program allows parents to "top-up" the voucher by paying additional tuition beyond the maximum voucher amount. Column 7 indicates whether schools must opt in to the program to become eligible for voucher payments. Column 8 indicates whether the voucher can be used to pay tuition at religious schools.

^a ITT estimate from table 4-1 is scaled by first-stage effect from table 2-5.

^b Footnote 4 suggests that families rarely paid out-of-pocket when tuition exceeded the voucher amount.

^c ITT estimates from table 4 are scaled by baseline math standard deviations from table 3 and first-stage effects from table 6.

^d This is an annual gain estimate from a student fixed effects specification pooling data for four years (table VI, column 2).

^e Since Rouse's (1998) study, the program rules have changed to reduce the maximum voucher below public per pupil expenditure, permit a limited amount of top-up, and allow participation by religious schools.

IV. Mechanisms

The negative effects of the LSP are surprising since many studies of oversubscribed school choice programs find positive or zero effects. Table 8 compares math achievement effects and program rules for the LSP versus several other voucher programs evaluated in the recent literature. Other programs use roughly similar income eligibility limits and rules for determining maximum voucher payments. Like the LSP, most other programs also allow vouchers to be used for tuition at religious schools, and some require private schools to opt into participation. The LSP is fairly unusual in prohibiting families from topping up the voucher payment when it falls short of private school tuition, a rule that may limit incentives for expensive, high-quality private schools to opt in. At the same time, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program also prohibited top-up payments at the time of Rouse's (1998) evaluation, and this program increased achievement.

Overall, Table 8 shows that there is nothing distinctive about the LSP's basic structure that would be expected to yield negative achievement effects. We next assess several potential mechanisms that might explain the negative effects of LSP vouchers: lack of private school experience with state tests and the LSP-eligible population, problems associated with statewide expansion, disruption effects due to school switching, the quality of public schools attended by LSP lottery losers, and negative selection of private schools into the program. While this investigation is necessarily more speculative than our lottery-based analysis of program impacts, we find suggestive evidence that negative voucher effects are linked to lower quality private school participation in the LSP.

A. Experience with the LSP Program

Our estimates capture effects for LSP voucher applicants for 2012–2013, the year in which the LSP expanded statewide. Private schools may have been inexperienced with standardized tests and unfamiliar with the needs of LSP students during this transitional period. Newly participating schools also had little time to adapt their curricula to match state exam content. This lack of experience with LSP students and the program in general may have contributed to the LSP's negative effects.

Table 9 presents the results of three analyses that shed light on this hypothesis. Columns 1 and 2 compare effects for private schools that entered the LSP in 2012–2013 with schools that entered in prior years. Earlier entrants had more time to adjust to state assessments and were more experienced with the program before statewide expansion. Estimated effects for early and late entrants are negative and similar in all four subjects. Evidently, the negative effects of the LSP are not driven by private schools new to the program.

Along similar lines, columns 3 and 4 of Table 9 investigate differences in effects between the transitional 2012–2013 cohort and earlier applicant waves. Lack of oversubscription in the program's early years prevents a lottery-based analysis for earlier cohorts. As shown in Table 4, however, 2SLS and OLS estimates for 2012–2013 are very similar, thereby suggesting modest unobserved differences between applicants who accept and decline vouchers. We therefore report OLS estimates for applicant cohorts prior to 2012, with the caveat that these estimates may be affected by selection bias. OLS estimates for students applying from 2008 to 2011 are negative and similar to corresponding estimates for the 2012 cohort. This suggests that the negative effects of LSP participation were present before expansion and are not a temporary artifact of the effort to scale up the program statewide.⁵

Finally, to explore the role of mismatch between private school curricula and state exams, columns 5 and 6 of Table 9 report estimates from 2SLS models that interact LSP participation with the share of students at a school receiving LSP vouchers. The voucher share is jackknifed to remove the influence of a student's own enrollment

⁵ Consistent with this evidence, a recent followup analysis by Mills and Wolf (2016, 2017) documents that the LSP's negative effects persist into the second year of participation for the 2012–2013 cohort. However, their results show a large baseline imbalance in the number of schools listed by lottery winners and losers along with significantly smaller first-stage impacts on LSP participation than we find in Table 4. This suggests that their data are not adequate to reconstruct the LSP voucher assignment process.

TABLE 9—VOUCHER EFFECTS BY EXPERIENCE WITH THE PROGRAM

Subject	By year school entered program		By student application year (OLS)		By voucher enrollment share	
	In 2012 (1)	Before 2012 (2)	2008–2011 (3)	2012 (4)	Below median (5)	Above median (6)
Math	–0.410 (0.103)	–0.425 (0.174)	–0.350 (0.095)	–0.442 (0.050)	–0.347 (0.158)	–0.434 (0.100)
Observations	757	490	615	3,261	540	572
<i>p</i> -value		0.942		0.389		0.641
ELA	–0.078 (0.100)	–0.083 (0.131)	–0.185 (0.110)	–0.165 (0.040)	–0.100 (0.127)	–0.030 (0.114)
Observations	758	490	616	3,259	540	573
<i>p</i> -value		0.978		0.865		0.682
Science	–0.291 (0.114)	–0.217 (0.174)	–0.515 (0.115)	–0.286 (0.041)	–0.249 (0.131)	–0.219 (0.153)
Observations	739	482	613	3,189	533	558
<i>p</i> -value		0.723		0.060		0.882
Social studies	–0.354 (0.110)	–0.291 (0.157)	–0.423 (0.128)	–0.295 (0.041)	–0.290 (0.124)	–0.338 (0.150)
Observations	738	482	613	3,189	532	558
<i>p</i> -value		0.745		0.339		0.805

Notes: This table reports estimates from models interacting Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) participation with measures of schools' experience with the program. Column 1 shows 2SLS estimates for schools that entered the program in 2012, while column 2 reports estimates for schools that participated in the program before 2012. Columns 3 and 4 report OLS estimates for students applying in 2008–2011 and 2012. The OLS sample includes first-time applicants to LSP schools for grades 3–8 from the 2008–2009 school year through the 2012–2013 school year. OLS models interact LSP participation with an indicator for applying before 2012 and control for first choice-year-grade indicators as well as sex, race, NSECD status, and family income quartile. Columns 5 and 6 show 2SLS estimates for schools above and below the sample median voucher enrollment share. See notes to Table 4 for a description of the 2SLS model specification. *p*-values are from tests of the hypothesis that subgroup differences are zero. Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

choice. The average voucher enrollment share above the median of this measure is 0.42. This implies that some participating private schools administer tests to a large fraction of their students and therefore have a strong incentive to tailor instruction to state exam content. Results here show that if anything, schools serving more voucher students appear to generate larger achievement losses. The estimates are negative for schools both above and below the median voucher share, with slightly more negative math and social studies effects for schools above the median. Together, the results in Table 9 provide no evidence that either lack of experience with the LSP or temporary problems due to the statewide expansion are responsible for the program's negative effects.

B. School Switching and Disruption Effects

LSP participants switch from public schools to private schools. School switching may account for the negative effects of LSP vouchers if moving between schools disrupts student learning. Yet, this explanation is implausible for two reasons. First, the disruptive effects of school switching are typically estimated to be small. For example, Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) estimate that switching reduces math

achievement by roughly 0.03σ on average. Second, school switching is a feature of all lottery-based evaluations of school choice programs, and many of these studies (including the other voucher programs in Table 8) show zero or positive effects in the first post-lottery year (Abdulkadiroğlu et al. 2011; Cullen, Jacob, and Levitt 2006; Howell and Peterson 2002; Wolf et al. 2010). School switching alone is therefore insufficient to explain negative voucher impacts.

C. Public School Fallbacks

Lottery-based estimates capture causal effects of LSP participation relative to the schools that applicants would otherwise attend. Recent research demonstrates that some public charter schools in New Orleans generate very large test score gains (Abdulkadiroğlu et al. 2016). If voucher lottery losers attend these or other high-performing schools, the negative effects of LSP participation may be due to high scores in public school fallbacks rather than low performance at private schools. To some extent this issue is addressed by the distributional estimates in Figure 3, which show that mean untreated scores for compliers are below mean scores in the New Orleans RSD. This indicates that complier scores are not especially high at fallback public schools. Nevertheless, a complete interpretation of LSP effects requires understanding the mix of schools that define the voucher complier counterfactual.

We estimate characteristics of complier fallback schools with the equation

$$(4) \quad C_{s(i)} \times (1 - P_i) = \psi(1 - P_i) + \sum_{\ell} \mu_{\ell} d_{i\ell} + \mathbf{X}_i' \alpha + \xi_i,$$

instrumenting $(1 - P_i)$ with the voucher offer Z_i . Here, $s(i)$ indicates the school attended by student i , and $C_{s(i)}$ is a characteristic of this school. By the same logic underlying the density estimation procedure based on equation (3), the 2SLS coefficient ψ captures the average of $C_{s(i)}$ for compliers denied the opportunity to use LSP vouchers (Abadie 2002).

Table 10 describes counterfactual schools for voucher compliers. Columns 1 and 2 report mean school characteristics for offered and non-offered students, and column 4 reports 2SLS estimates of equation (4). A voucher offer reduces the probability of attending a charter school from 0.14 to 0.04 and lowers the probability of attending another public school from 0.77 to 0.22. As shown in column 4, these changes imply that 14 percent of compliers attend charter schools when denied an offer, and 82 percent attend other public schools. The remaining 4 percent attend schools of unknown type, possibly other private schools.

The last two rows of column 4 report fractions of students passing math and ELA tests at fallback schools. These results come from estimation of (4) setting C_s equal to the fraction of students at school s scoring Basic or above. Sixty-one percent of compliers' peers earn passing scores in math, and 57 percent pass ELA. These rates are well below the Louisiana state average (roughly 70 percent in each subject) and slightly below the RSD average (66 and 60 percent in math and ELA; Louisiana Department of Education 2014b). This investigation of counterfactuals shows that the negative effects of LSP participation are not due to atypical fallback

TABLE 10—CHARACTERISTICS OF TREATMENT AND FALLBACK SCHOOLS FOR VOUCHER APPLICANTS

	All applicants		Voucher compliers	
	Offered (1)	Not offered (2)	Offered (3)	Not offered (4)
Voucher school	0.730	0.051	1.000	0.000
Charter school	0.044	0.140	0.000	0.141
Other public school	0.216	0.772	0.000	0.819
Unknown school type	0.010	0.037	0.000	0.040
Fraction Basic or above: math	0.540	0.590	0.436	0.611
ELA	0.561	0.586	0.497	0.565

Notes: This table describes characteristics of schools attended by offered and non-offered applicants to the Louisiana Scholarship Program. The sample includes first-time voucher applicants, subject to first-choice random assignment, applying to grades 3–8 in 2012–2013. Columns 1 and 2 compare characteristics of the schools attended by offered and non-offered students. Columns 3 and 4 compare school characteristics for compliers who enroll in voucher schools in response to random offers. Fractions scoring Basic or above in math and ELA cover all students attending public schools, including non-applicants; for students attending voucher schools, these fractions include only voucher applicants.

schools: compliers denied vouchers score below the RSD average and attend mostly traditional public schools with achievement comparable to schools in disadvantaged urban districts. The negative impacts of LSP vouchers are due instead to extremely low scores for compliers in private schools.

D. Private School Selection

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 show that the LSP attracts private schools with low tuition and declining enrollment. This suggests that low-quality private schools may be disproportionately likely to opt into the LSP. To investigate whether negative selection of private schools can explain the program's negative achievement impacts, Table 11 reports relationships between voucher effects and school quality measures among participating schools.

Columns 1 and 2 show estimates from 2SLS models interacting LSP participation with a school's change in log enrollment between the two PSS waves prior to entering the LSP. The interaction coefficients for changes in log enrollment are close to zero and statistically insignificant, implying that effects are not especially negative for private schools experiencing the fastest enrollment losses. Estimates of this interaction effect are reasonably precise: we can reject that an additional 10 percent annual decline in enrollment is associated with a 0.08σ decrease in a school's math effect.⁶

On the other hand, math achievement effects are significantly more negative for schools with lower tuition. Columns 3 and 4 report results from models that interact LSP participation with tuition. The estimates show that a \$1,000 increase in tuition is associated with a 0.26σ increase in a school's math effect. The interaction model

⁶The upper bound of a 95 percent confidence interval for the additional achievement impact associated with a 100 percent increase in enrollment is $-0.09\sigma + 1.96 \times 0.22\sigma = 0.34\sigma$. Enrollment changes are computed over a two-year period, so this corresponds to a 50 percent annual change. The upper bound of a 95 percent confidence interval for a 10 percent annual change is therefore $0.34\sigma \times 0.2 = 0.07\sigma$.

TABLE 11—VOUCHER EFFECTS BY MEASURES OF SCHOOL QUALITY

Subject	By change in log enrollment		By tuition (\$1,000s)		By performance sanction	
	Main effect (1)	Interaction (2)	Main effect (3)	Interaction (4)	Sanctioned (5)	Not sanctioned (6)
Math	-0.352 (0.098)	-0.092 (0.223)	-0.355 (0.091)	0.263 (0.121)	-0.384 (0.118)	-0.452 (0.139)
Observations	938		1,050		672	575
<i>p</i> -value	0.679		0.030		0.709	
ELA	-0.039 (0.091)	-0.015 (0.332)	-0.037 (0.087)	0.167 (0.106)	-0.129 (0.113)	-0.023 (0.111)
Observations	939		1,051		673	575
<i>p</i> -value	0.963		0.114		0.501	
Science	-0.214 (0.111)	-0.397 (0.276)	-0.196 (0.100)	0.118 (0.113)	-0.277 (0.149)	-0.248 (0.113)
Observations	918		1,031		653	568
<i>p</i> -value	0.150		0.299		0.876	
Social studies	-0.273 (0.104)	0.186 (0.313)	-0.265 (0.090)	0.170 (0.121)	-0.322 (0.125)	-0.341 (0.129)
Observations	917		1,030		653	567
<i>p</i> -value	0.552		0.158		0.919	

Notes: This table reports estimates from 2SLS models interacting Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) participation with measures of the quality of the private schools to which students applied. Columns 1 and 2 show 2SLS estimates from a model interacting LSP participation with the change in log enrollment between the two most recent PSS surveys prior to entering the program, instrumenting with the interaction of the change in log enrollment and the lottery offer. The sample in these columns is restricted to schools for which PSS data are available. Columns 3 and 4 display 2SLS estimates interacting LSP participation with tuition. The sample in these columns is restricted to schools with available tuition data. Column 5 reports effects for schools that were sanctioned for academic performance in 2013–2014, and column 6 reports effects for schools that were not sanctioned. Interacting variables are demeaned in the estimation sample, so that main effects are at the mean. See notes to Table 4 for a description of the 2SLS model specification. *p*-values are from tests of the hypothesis that interaction effects or subgroup differences are zero. Standard errors, clustered by risk set, are in parentheses.

predicts a math effect of -0.06σ for a private school with average tuition compared to -0.36σ for an average oversubscribed LSP school.⁷ Tuition interaction estimates for the other three subjects are also positive, though somewhat smaller and statistically insignificant.

The tuition interaction estimates suggest that selection of low-quality schools into LSP participation can account for a substantial portion of the program's negative math effects. The LSP's strict test-based accountability sanctions aim to mitigate this type of selection by removing low-performing schools. Similar sanctions appear to be effective at improving achievement in other contexts (Chiang 2009; Rockoff and Turner 2010; Rouse et al. 2013; Deming et al. 2016); we might expect the LSP to improve over time if its sanctions successfully identify the participating schools with most negative achievement effects. Columns 5 and 6 of Table 11 assess the efficacy of the program's accountability rules by comparing effects for

⁷Using the statistics in Table 2, the predicted effect for an average school is $-0.36\sigma + 0.26\sigma \times \left(\frac{\$5,760 - \$4,653}{\$1,600} \right) = -0.06\sigma$.

the 23 schools sanctioned for low scores in 2013–2014 to effects for unsanctioned schools. Estimates for these two groups are similar and not statistically distinguishable. This implies that the unadjusted test score levels used to determine LSP sanctions are not a reliable guide to causal achievement effects: voucher impacts are equally negative for schools not sanctioned for low scores. In other words, the existing accountability rules do not appear to identify the low-quality schools that drive the negative effects of the LSP.

V. Conclusion

This paper shows that the expansion of school choice can reduce student achievement. The Louisiana Scholarship Program, a large school choice program providing private school vouchers to poor students attending low-performing public schools, reduces academic achievement one year after program entry, lowering mean test scores and increasing the likelihood of failure in math, reading, science, and social studies. These impacts are consistent across subgroups and geographic locations and are robust to adjustments for differential attrition between lottery winners and losers.

Private schools must apply for eligibility to enroll LSP voucher students. Survey data indicate that LSP-eligible schools charge lower tuition and experience rapid enrollment declines relative to other nearby private schools before entering the program. In addition, tuition is inversely related to math achievement effects among participating schools. These facts suggest that the LSP attracts a negatively selected group of private schools with substantial negative achievement effects. A further question is why this form of selection occurs for the LSP, but not for other similarly structured voucher programs evaluated in the existing literature. The links between the effects of school choice, program design, and market characteristics are an important direction for future research.

The estimates reported here capture causal impacts of oversubscribed private schools. Evidently, many parents wish to enroll their children in these schools despite their negative test score impacts. This may reflect either lack of knowledge about achievement effects or demand for school characteristics other than academic quality, such as religious instruction or a change in peer environment. Existing estimates of the link between achievement gains and adult earnings suggest that the perceived value of these other amenities would have to be extraordinarily large to explain the choice to participate in the LSP. For example, Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2014b) estimate that a 1 standard deviation increase in math scores due to improved teacher quality boosts the present discounted value of lifetime earnings by about \$42,000 at age 12. This implies that the test score losses suffered by LSP participants in one year may be worth as much as \$17,000 per student.⁸

⁸Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2014b) calculate that the average present discounted value of earnings at age 12 in the United States equals \$522,000 in 2010 dollars. They estimate that a one standard deviation increase in teacher value-added in a single grade boosts adult earnings by 1.3 percent. The standard deviation of teacher math value-added in student test score units equals 0.16 σ , implying that a one standard deviation improvement in test scores is worth $\$522,000 \times 0.013/0.16 = \$42,413$. If the link between test score effects and earnings effects is similar for the LSP, the math estimate in Table 4 translates into an earnings impact of $-0.41 \times \$42,413 = -\$17,389$.

Parent knowledge and program effectiveness may change over time as low-performing schools face accountability sanctions and information about school quality is revealed. Our estimates show that schools not sanctioned for low achievement perform just as poorly as sanctioned schools, indicating that level-based accountability standards may not be sufficient to identify and remove unproductive schools unless the threat of sanctions induces significant changes in future years. The evolution of choice behavior and program effects for future cohorts is another key question for future work.

APPENDIX A. COMPLIER CHARACTERISTICS

This Appendix describes the methods used to compute characteristics and potential outcome distributions for LSP voucher lottery compliers. As in the local average treatment effect (LATE) framework of Imbens and Angrist (1994), let $Y_i(1)$ and $Y_i(0)$ denote potential test scores as a function of the LSP treatment indicator P_i , and let $P_i(1)$ and $P_i(0)$ denote potential treatment choices as a function of the voucher lottery offer Z_i . Observed treatment is $P_i = P_i(Z_i)$, and the observed outcome is $Y_i = Y_i(P_i)$. The term X_i denotes a vector of baseline covariates.

Assume the vector $(Y_i(1), Y_i(0), P_i(1), P_i(0), X_i)$ is independent of Z_i and that $P_i(1) \geq P_i(0)$ for all i , with strict inequality for a positive measure of students. Then, for any measurable function $g(Y_i, X_i)$, Lemma 2.1 in Abadie (2002) implies

$$(A1) \quad \frac{E[g(Y_i, X_i) P_i | Z_i = 1] - E[g(Y_i, X_i) P_i | Z_i = 0]}{E[P_i | Z_i = 1] - E[P_i | Z_i = 0]} \\ = E[g(Y_i(1), X_i) | P_i(1) > P_i(0)],$$

$$(A2) \quad \frac{E[g(Y_i, X_i)(1 - P_i) | Z_i = 1] - E[g(Y_i, X_i)(1 - P_i) | Z_i = 0]}{E[1 - P_i | Z_i = 1] - E[1 - P_i | Z_i = 0]} \\ = E[g(Y_i(0), X_i) | P_i(1) > P_i(0)].$$

The left-hand side of (A1) is the Wald (1940) instrumental variables estimand using Z_i as an instrument for P_i in an equation for $g(Y_i, X_i) P_i$. Likewise, the left-hand side of (A2) is the IV estimand using Z_i as an instrument for $(1 - P_i)$ in an equation for $g(Y_i, X_i)(1 - P_i)$. Equations (A1) and (A2) imply that these IV procedures yield mean values of $g(Y_i, X_i)$ for compliers in the treated and untreated states.

We apply these results to estimate complier characteristics and potential outcome distributions. In practice, our IV models control for lottery risk-set indicators; the arguments in Angrist and Imbens (1995) imply the resulting 2SLS estimates are weighted averages of within-risk-set complier means. Control complier means in Table 5 are obtained by setting $g(Y_i, X_i) = Y_i$ in equation (A2). Counterfactual school characteristics in Table 10 are obtained by setting $g(Y_i, X_i) = C_{s(i)}$. (The school characteristic $C_{s(i)}$ may be viewed as an additional outcome variable.)

Treated and untreated complier densities in Figure 3 are obtained by setting $g(Y_i, X_i) = \frac{1}{h} K\left(\frac{Y_i - y}{h}\right)$ in (A1) and (A2). Density estimation also requires selecting the bandwidth h . We use Silverman's (1986) rule-of-thumb bandwidth for the Gaussian kernel function, given by

$$h = 1.06 \sigma_y n^{-1/5},$$

where σ_y is the standard deviation of the outcome and n is the sample size. A complication arises in using this rule for complier density estimation because both standard deviations of complier outcomes and the number of compliers in the data are unobserved. We estimate standard deviations of complier potential outcomes by setting $g(Y_i, X_i)$ equal to Y_i and Y_i^2 in (A1) and (A2). This yields complier estimates of the first two noncentral moments of $Y_i(1)$ and $Y_i(0)$, which are then used to construct an estimate of σ_y for each potential outcome. The expected number of treated compliers in the sample is $n_c^1 = p_z \cdot \pi \cdot n$, where $p_z = \Pr[Z_i = 1]$. The number of treated compliers is the fraction of lottery winners times the population share of compliers (equal to the first stage coefficient π) times total sample size. Likewise, the expected non-treated complier sample size is $n_c^0 = (1 - p_z) \cdot \pi \cdot n$. We plug the empirical lottery offer probability and first stage coefficient into these formulas to construct rule-of-thumb bandwidths appropriate for complier density estimation.

Figure 3 also reports bootstrap p -values from tests of the null hypothesis that treated and untreated complier distributions are equal. The underlying tests are based on methods from Abadie (2002), who notes that treated and untreated complier distributions are equal if and only if the distribution of Y_i does not depend on Z_i . A test statistic for this hypothesis is the maximum difference in CDFs for the $Z_i = 1$ and $Z_i = 0$ samples. Differences in CDFs are estimated by regressing $1\{Y_i \leq y\}$ on Z_i for 100 equally spaced values of y covering the support of Y_i , controlling for risk-set indicators. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistic is the maximum of absolute values of the coefficients across these regressions.

A bootstrap distribution for the KS statistic is constructed by first drawing samples with replacement stratified by risk set and then randomly assigning simulated lottery offers to match the full-sample proportions offered within each risk set. The KS statistic is then recomputed in each bootstrap sample. The bootstrap p -value for a test of equality of treated and untreated complier distributions is the fraction of bootstrap KS statistics greater than the full-sample KS statistic. We implement this procedure in Figure 3 using 250 bootstrap trials.

Finally, to aid interpretation of the magnitudes of differences in distributions, the reported KS statistics in Figure 3 are maximum differences in complier CDFs rather than maximum differences in offered and non-offered CDFs. Complier CDFs are estimated by plugging $1\{Y_i \leq y\}$ into (A1) and (A2) at the same 100 points used in the bootstrap tests for distributional equality.

APPENDIX B. BOUNDS ON VOUCHER EFFECTS

We next describe methods for bounding local average treatment effects in the presence of differential attrition between lottery winners and losers. The arguments

here follow those in Engberg et al. (2014), adapted to the notation used in our analysis. As in Appendix A, define potential outcomes $Y_i(p)$ and potential treatments $P_i(z)$ and assume these are independent of Z_i . Now, however, let the treatment variable P_i take three values: $P_i \in \{0, 1, a\}$. When $P_i = a$, student i attrits from the sample, and her outcome is not observed.

We make the following monotonicity assumption on responses to voucher offers:

$$P_i(1) \neq P_i(0) \Rightarrow P_i(1) = 1.$$

This restriction implies that any student who changes behavior in response to a voucher offer does so to participate in the LSP program. In other words, no one exits LSP in response to an offer, and no one exits the sample in response to an offer.

Under this assumption the population can be partitioned into the following groups:

- (i) Always takers: $P_i(1) = P_i(0) = 1$.
- (ii) Never takers: $P_i(1) = P_i(0) = 0$.
- (iii) Always attriters: $P_i(1) = P_i(0) = a$.
- (iv) Compliers: $P_i(1) = 1, P_i(0) = 0$.
- (v) At-risk: $P_i(1) = 1, P_i(0) = a$.

This classification scheme is a version of the principal stratification framework of Frangakis and Rubin (2002), which divides an experimental population into groups defined by responses to random assignment. The twist here relative to the usual LATE model is the presence of at-risk students. Without such students, IV estimates of voucher effects are consistent for local average treatment effects. With these students, LATE is not identified, and we must bound it.

Let π^g denote population shares of the five groups for $g \in \{at, nt, aa, c, ar\}$. Likewise, let μ_p^g denote the mean of $Y_i(p)$ for group g and $p \in \{0, 1\}$. The average causal effect of voucher receipt for compliers is $LATE \equiv \mu_1^c - \mu_0^c$. To bound this quantity, first note that the population shares of each group are identified, since

$$\Pr[P_i = 1 | Z_i = 0] = \pi^{at},$$

$$\Pr[P_i = 0 | Z_i = 1] = \pi^{nt},$$

$$\Pr[P_i = a | Z_i = 1] = \pi^{aa},$$

$$\Pr[P_i = 0 | Z_i = 0] - \Pr[P_i = 0 | Z_i = 1] = \pi^c,$$

$$\Pr[P_i = a | Z_i = 0] - \Pr[P_i = a | Z_i = 1] = \pi^{ar}.$$

Mean observed outcomes for non-treated students by offer status are

$$E[Y_i | P_i = 0, Z_i = 1] = \mu_0^{nt},$$

$$E[Y_i | P_i = Z_i = 0] = \left(\frac{\pi^{nt}}{\pi^c + \pi^{nt}} \right) \mu_0^{nt} + \left(\frac{\pi^c}{\pi^c + \pi^{nt}} \right) \mu_0^c.$$

These expressions show that the never taker mean is observed among students who decline offers, and the group of non-offered, non-treated students is a mixture of never takers and compliers. The non-treated complier mean can then be backed out as

$$\mu_0^c = \frac{(\pi^c + \pi^{nt})E[Y_i | P_i = Z_i = 0] - \pi^{nt}E[Y_i | P_i = 0, Z_i = 1]}{\pi^c}.$$

It is straightforward to show that the moments in this equation are equivalent to those used in equation (A2) when $g(Y_i, X_i) = Y_i$, substituting $1\{P_i = 0\}$ for $(1 - P_i)$ since P_i is now an unordered treatment.

The presence of at-risk students prevents us from backing out μ_1^c in similar fashion. To bound it, note that we can identify the distribution of $Y_i(1)$ for the pooled population of compliers and at-risk students. Specifically, we have

$$(B1) \quad \frac{E[1\{Y_i \leq y\}1\{P_i = 1\}|Z_i = 1] - E[1\{Y_i \leq y\}1\{P_i = 1\}|Z_i = 0]}{E[1\{P_i = 1\}|Z_i = 1] - E[1\{P_i = 1\}|Z_i = 0]}$$

$$= \Pr[Y_i(1) \leq y | P_i(1) \neq P_i(0)]$$

$$\equiv F_1(y).$$

This result follows by applying equation (A1).

The minimum possible value of μ_1^c occurs when compliers occupy the entire lower tail of this mixture distribution. The complier share in the mixture is $\pi^c/(\pi^c + \pi^{ar})$. Then,

$$\mu_1^c \geq E\left[Y_i(1) | Y_i(1) \leq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^c}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right), P_i(1) \neq P_i(0)\right]$$

$$= \frac{E\left[Y_i 1\left\{Y_i \leq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^c}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)\right\} 1\{P_i = 1\} | Z_i = 1\right]}{E[1\{P_i = 0\} | Z_i = 0] - E[1\{P_i = 0\} | Z_i = 1]}$$

$$= \frac{E\left[Y_i 1\left\{Y_i \leq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^c}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)\right\} 1\{P_i = 1\} | Z_i = 0\right]}{E[1\{P_i = 0\} | Z_i = 0] - E[1\{P_i = 0\} | Z_i = 1]}$$

$$\equiv \mu_{\min}.$$

where the first equality follows from another application of equation (A1), rescaling appropriately by the probability that the event $\left\{Y_i \leq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^c}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)\right\}$ occurs in the mixture of treated compliers and at-risk students. Similarly, an upper bound for the treated complier mean is

$$\begin{aligned} \mu_1^c &\leq E\left[Y_i(1) \mid Y_i(1) \geq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^{ar}}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right), P_i(1) \neq P_i(0)\right] \\ &= \frac{E\left[Y_i 1\left\{Y_i \geq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^{ar}}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)\right\} 1\{P_i = 1\} \mid Z_i = 1\right]}{E[1\{P_i = 0\} \mid Z_i = 0] - E[1\{P_i = 0\} \mid Z_i = 1]} \\ &\quad - \frac{E\left[Y_i 1\left\{Y_i \geq F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^{ar}}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)\right\} 1\{P_i = 1\} \mid Z_i = 0\right]}{E[1\{P_i = 0\} \mid Z_i = 0] - E[1\{P_i = 0\} \mid Z_i = 1]} \\ &\equiv \mu_{\max}. \end{aligned}$$

Bounds on LATE are then

$$\mu_{\min} - \mu_0^c \leq LATE \leq \mu_{\max} - \mu_0^c.$$

Estimation of these bounds is implemented with the following steps:

- (i) Estimate the probabilities π^{ar} and π^c as minus the shifts in the probability of attrition and non-participation induced by the lottery offer.
- (ii) Estimate the CDF of $Y_i(1)$ for the mixture of compliers and at-risk students using equation (B1).
- (iii) Use the estimated CDF to find $F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^c}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)$ and $F_1^{-1}\left(\frac{\pi^{ar}}{\pi^c + \pi^{ar}}\right)$. This can be done by searching over values of y to find the point that yields the appropriate value of $F_1(y)$.
- (iv) Use the expressions above to estimate μ_{\max} and μ_{\min} .
- (v) Estimate μ_0^c using equation (A2), setting $g(Y_i, X_i) = Y_i$ and substituting $1\{P_i = 0\}$ for $(1 - P_i)$.
- (vi) Construct bounds for LATE using the estimates of μ_{\max} , μ_{\min} , and μ_0^c .

After estimating the bounds we obtain standard errors by conducting 100 bootstrap replications of the entire procedure. In practice, risk set indicators and baseline covariates are included in all regressions used to estimate group shares, CDFs, and mean potential outcomes.

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Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program

Impacts Two Years After Students Applied

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Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

The research team for this evaluation included staff from Westat and a subcontractor, Mark Dynarski. None of the research team members has financial interests that could be affected by findings from the evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). No one on the six-member technical working group, convened by the research team four times to provide advice and guidance, has financial interests that could be affected by findings from the evaluation.

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Executive Summary

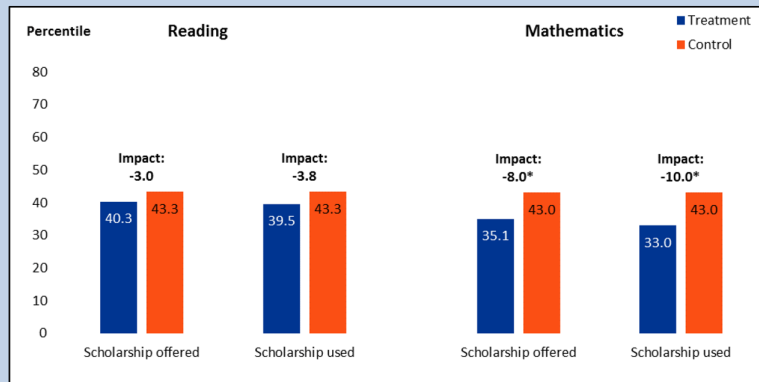
The District of Columbia (DC) Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) was created by Congress in 2004 to provide tuition vouchers to low-income DC parents who want their child to attend a private school. Reauthorized in 2011 by the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act, the program places a priority on serving students leaving low-performing public schools and provides them scholarships of about \$8,000 for grades K–8 and \$12,000 for grades 9–12 to attend a participating private school. These private schools must agree to requirements regarding nondiscrimination in admissions, fiscal accountability, and employing teachers with at least a bachelor’s degree.

The SOAR Act also mandated an evaluation of the OSP program, with annual reports to Congress. This report examines impacts two years after eligible families applied to the program on student achievement, satisfaction with schools, perceptions of school safety, and parent involvement in education—all outcomes the legislation required the evaluation to address.

Because the program operator selected students to receive scholarship offers using a lottery process in 2012, 2013, and 2014, the evaluation is able to provide rigorous estimates of the program’s impacts. Specifically, differences found when comparing outcomes for the treatment group (995 students selected through the lottery to receive scholarship offers) and the control group (776 students not selected to receive scholarship offers) can be attributed to the OSP program and not some other difference between the two groups. Because students who were offered a scholarship did not have to use it, the evaluation examines both the impacts of being offered and the impacts of using scholarships. Key findings include:

The OSP had a statistically significant negative impact on mathematics achievement after two years. Mathematics scores were lower for students two years after they applied to the OSP (by 8.0 percentile points for students offered a scholarship and 10.0 percentile points for students who used their scholarship), compared with students who applied but were not selected for the scholarship. Reading scores were lower (by 3.0 and 3.8 percentile points, respectively) but the differences were not statistically significant (figure E-1). Similarly, for students applying from low-performing schools (those designated as “in need of improvement” or SINI), to whom the SOAR Act gave priority for scholarships, the negative impact on mathematics scores but not reading scores was statistically significant.

Figure E-1. Impacts on reading and mathematics achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



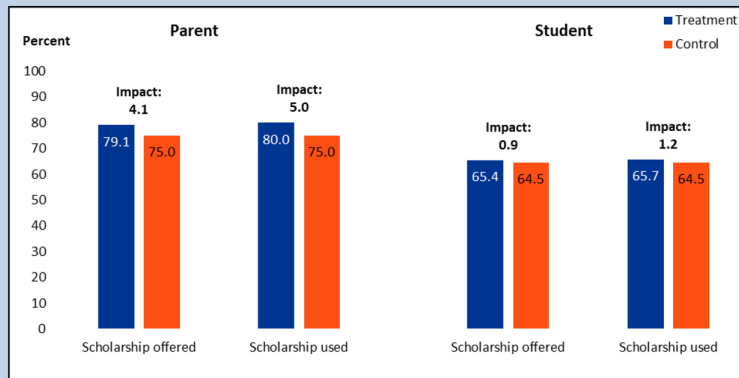
* Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 612 treatment group students and 389 control group students for reading, and 609 treatment group students and 387 control group students for mathematics.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

The program did not have a statistically significant impact on parents' or students' general satisfaction with the school the child was attending two years after applying to the program. Parents of students who were offered or used the OSP scholarships were more likely to give their child's school a grade of A or B (on an A through F scale), compared with the parents of students not selected for the scholarship offer, but differences were not statistically significant. Similarly, students who were offered or used the OSP scholarships were more likely to give their school a grade of A or B, but differences were again not statistically significant (figure E-2).

Figure E-2. Impacts on parent and student general satisfaction (percentage giving school an A or B grade) for scholarship offer and use, in second year

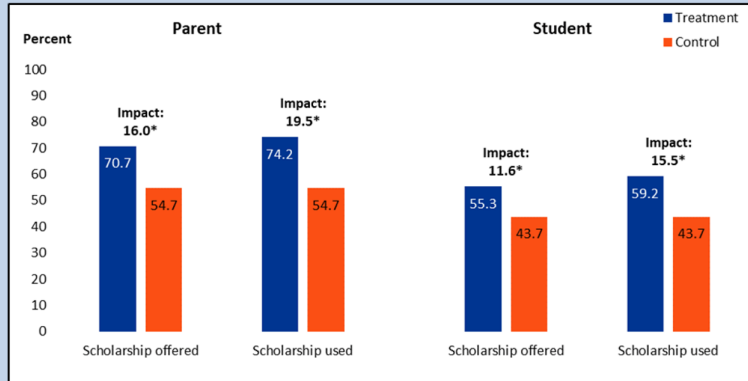


NOTE: Sample size is 569 treatment group parents and 382 control group parents. Sample size is 331 treatment group students and 196 control group students.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent and student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

The program had a statistically significant positive impact on both parents' and students' general perceptions of school safety two years after applying to the program. Parent and student surveys asked respondents to rate their school as very safe, somewhat safe, or not safe. Parents of students offered or using the OSP scholarships and the students themselves were more likely to indicate that their school was very safe, compared with those not selected for the scholarship offer (figure E-3). Similarly, for both parents of students applying from low-performing SINI schools and the students themselves, the program had a positive impact on perceptions of school safety.

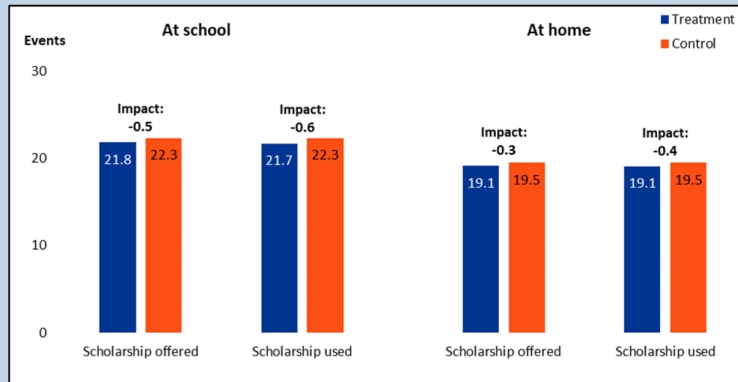
Figure E-3. Impacts on parent and student general perceptions of school safety (percentage rating school as very safe) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
 NOTE: Sample size is 566 treatment group parents and 370 control group parents. Sample size is 320 treatment group students and 183 control group students.
 SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent and student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

The program did not have a statistically significant impact on parents' involvement in the education of their child two years after applying to the program (figure E-4). Parents of students offered or using the OSP scholarships reported similar levels of participation in education-related activities at school and in the home, compared with the parents of students not selected for the scholarship offer (figure E-4).

Figure E-4. Impacts on parent involvement in education at school and at home (number of events reported) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



NOTE: Sample size for school involvement is 540 treatment group parents and 349 control group parents. Sample size for home involvement is 564 treatment group parents and 375 control group parents.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

When considering these findings, it is important to note that impacts reported here are from the second year during which students could have used their scholarships. Also, the OSP operates in DC, where the majority of families already exercise school choice.^[1] In this setting, the evaluation is assessing the impacts of adding a private-school option to a set of existing choice options. It is not assessing the impacts of attending private school compared with attending an assigned traditional public school. The evaluation also is not assessing the impacts of “school choice” in general, which is not possible in a setting in which school choice already is prevalent. In addition, the OSP is the only federally funded voucher program. The combination of elements—a program whose funding and support has shifted over time at the federal level, operating within a city that offers ample options for parents to choose schools—makes findings from this evaluation challenging to generalize to other settings, such as voucher programs operated statewide or in settings that currently have limited choice options. However, the evaluation’s findings have a high degree of validity when viewed within the context of DC.

^[1]In 2012, 75 percent of public school students in DC attended a school that was not their assigned neighborhood school (21st Century School Fund, 2014).

1. Introduction

The District of Columbia (DC) Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) is the only federally funded program that provides vouchers to low-income families to send their children to private schools that agree to accept them. State funding of such programs began in 1990, in Milwaukee. By 2017, 14 states were funding private school vouchers for at least some groups of students.

The merits of voucher programs continue to be debated, with advocates citing the benefits of school options and competition for public schools and critics objecting to the diversion of public funds to private organizations, including religious schools.¹ The debates indicate significant interest in understanding whether and how these programs are effective. This report, from a congressionally mandated evaluation of the OSP, describes the impacts of the OSP on students and parents two years after they applied to the program. It is the fifth in a series of required annual reports from the evaluation.²

Congress created the OSP in 2004 and reauthorized it in 2011 under the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act.³ The SOAR Act establishes criteria for student eligibility, the groups of students who receive priority for scholarships, and scholarship dollar amounts, as shown in exhibit 1. Participating private schools must agree to requirements regarding nondiscrimination in admissions, fiscal accountability, having teachers with at least a bachelor's degree, and cooperation with an evaluation of the program. A program operator administers the OSP through a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (the Department).

Exhibit 1. Overview of the Opportunity Scholarship Program as defined in the SOAR Act

Student eligibility criteria

- DC resident
- Income at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line at application
- Priority to students who:
 - Had a sibling already in program
 - Attended a low-performing school in need of improvement
 - Were offered a scholarship in the past but did not use it
 - Were not already taking advantage of school choice

Initial scholarship amount

- \$8,000 for grades K–8
- \$12,000 for grades 9–12

Congress required an independent evaluation of the OSP under the SOAR Act, “using the strongest possible research design for determining effectiveness” to measure the program’s impacts on student academic progress, satisfaction, safety, and other key outcomes. The use of lotteries to award scholarships allows the study to use the “gold standard” of evaluation methodology, creating an experiment in which

¹ See <http://www.nesl.org/research/education/school-choice-vouchers.aspx>.

² The first three reports described the characteristics of program applicants and participating schools, parents’ considerations in applying to the OSP, and how participating schools differ from traditional public and charter schools in DC that OSP applicants might be able to attend. The fourth report described the impacts of the OSP one year after families applied to the program. A final sixth report will describe the impacts of the program three years after families applied to the program. Reports from this evaluation are available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/projects/evaluation/choice_soar.asp

³ See <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr471sh/pdf/BILLS-112hr471sh.pdf> for the SOAR Act legislation. The program recently was reauthorized in the Omnibus Reconciliation Act for 2017 spending, [H.R. 244](#).

outcomes for two randomly determined groups, treatment and control, can be compared to determine effectiveness. For this study, the treatment group consists of students selected through a lottery to receive a scholarship offer, and the control group consists of students not selected to receive a scholarship offer. Randomization helps to ensure that the two groups being compared were truly similar at the time of OSP application, and that—other than by chance—the only difference that could influence the outcomes is whether they received a scholarship offer.

It is important to note that the OSP operates in DC, where families increasingly have the option to apply to a large number of both charter and traditional public schools other than their assigned neighborhood school. Between 2004 and 2012 the number of charter schools in DC more than doubled (see Betts, Dynarski, and Feldman 2016). By 2012, 75 percent of all students enrolled in public schools in DC were attending a school other than their assigned neighborhood school (21st Century School Fund, 2014). Families in the treatment group had three types of school choice options—charter schools, a public school not in their neighborhood, or a private school whose tuition was fully or partly paid by the OSP. Families in the control group had the same three options but did not receive tuition support from the OSP if their child attended private school. Therefore, this evaluation is assessing the impacts of adding a private-school option to a set of existing choice options. It is not assessing the impacts of attending private school compared with attending an assigned traditional public school. The evaluation also is not assessing the impacts of “school choice” in general, which is not possible in a setting in which school choice already is prevalent.

More information about evaluation design is included in the next section (chapter 2). Chapter 3 describes OSP implementation and participating students and schools, to provide background for the second-year program impacts presented in chapter 4.

2. Evaluation of the OSP

The SOAR legislation required the evaluation to address the impacts of being offered an OSP scholarship and the actual use of an OSP scholarship on (1) student achievement, (2) parent and student satisfaction, (3) parent- and student-reported school safety, and (4) parent involvement (exhibit 2).⁴

This report examines how the offer and the use of a scholarship affected student and family outcomes in the second school year after applying to the OSP and entering a lottery. The study also examines impacts for specific groups of students, which can be useful for understanding whether the program was effective, or more effective, for some and not others. The report presents impacts for four student subgroups that were defined at the time students applied for the scholarship: (1) whether students were attending or not attending a school in need of improvement (SINI),⁵ (2) whether students scored above or below the median in reading,⁶ (3) whether students scored above or below the median in mathematics, and (4) whether students were entering an elementary grade (K–5) or secondary grade (6–12). The SOAR legislation designates students attending schools in need of improvement as a priority for scholarship awards and, therefore, impacts for this subgroup are a primary focus for the study in addition to impacts for the study sample overall. The three additional student subgroups are exploratory—to help identify hypotheses about how the OSP works and for whom—and were created to be consistent with the previous evaluation of the OSP program (Wolf et al. 2010), and for their relevance to policy. Specifically, pre-OSP performance levels of participating students may affect achievement impacts, and policymakers have an interest in determining whether programs have a greater effect on academically disadvantaged students.

Exhibit 2. Evaluation questions

1. Reading and Mathematics Achievement

What is the effect of receiving/using an OSP scholarship on reading and mathematics achievement?

2. Satisfaction

What is the effect of receiving/using an OSP scholarship on parent and student general satisfaction with the student's school?

3. School Safety

What is the effect of receiving/using an OSP scholarship on parent and student perceptions of school safety?

4. Parent Involvement

What is the effect of receiving/using an OSP scholarship on parent involvement in their child's education at home and at school?

⁴ Section 3009 of the SOAR Act also required the evaluation to examine retention, high school graduation, and college admission rates. However, because the majority of the evaluation's sample is in elementary school (see figure 1 in chapter 3) these outcomes cannot be examined in this current report.

⁵ Local education agencies—in Washington, DC, the DC Public Schools and the Public Charter School Board—determine whether a school is designated as “in need of improvement” under the No Child Left Behind Act (the version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] that was in place during the 2012–14 OSP application and lottery processes). Although DC was operating under an ESEA waiver from the Department during this period and using a different system and terms for designating categories of low-performing schools, DC's Office of the State Superintendent and the Department agreed on a way to designate schools to be consistent with the NCLB classification.

⁶ Defined in relation to the median performance of study participants at the time of application.

Similarly, analyzing impacts by grade level (elementary and secondary) helps to identify at what points in students' educational experience the program is or is not beneficial.

In the remainder of this chapter we describe the evaluation's sample, including the role of the OSP lotteries, data sources, analytic approach, and limitations.

The Sample: Number of Applicants and Scholarship Awards by Lotteries

The evaluation includes three consecutive cohorts of students from lotteries conducted in 2012, 2013, and 2014 (in late spring or early summer of each year).⁷ A total of 1,771 students applied for and were eligible to enter the lottery for scholarships in these three years. Students were assigned higher probabilities of selection if they had siblings in the program or were attending SINI schools at the time of application, as required by the OSP legislation.⁸ The OSP program operator conducted the annual lotteries using a computer program designed by the study team, with the execution of the lotteries supported by the study team and observed by staff from the Department.

The lotteries yielded scholarship offers to 995 students, 56 percent of eligible applicants (table 1). Students offered scholarships (i.e., in the treatment group) could use them to attend a private school that participates in the program, in which case the program paid the scholarship to the school. Students also could remain in their current public school, attend other public schools including charter schools, or attend a private school that did not participate in the program. In these cases, students would forgo their scholarship (use rates will be discussed in the following chapter).

Table 1. OSP scholarship offers by study cohort

Study cohort (year of application)	Number of applicants in lottery	Scholarship offered (treatment group)		Scholarship not offered (control group)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2012	536	316	59	220	41
2013	718	394	55	324	45
2014	517	285	55	232	45
Total	1,771	995	56	776	44

SOURCE: OSP applications.

Because the lotteries (essentially a flip of a coin), and not family preferences, determine which students are in the treatment and control groups, the two groups were expected to have similar characteristics—ones that could be observed, such as age, gender, and income, and ones that could not be observed or were difficult to observe, such as motivation to succeed in school and desire to attend a private school. In fact, the characteristics of the treatment and control groups were quite similar. For

⁷ A lottery was not conducted in 2011, the first year after the OSP was reauthorized. That year, all eligible applicants were offered a scholarship, and therefore, that cohort of applicants cannot be used in this experimental evaluation.

⁸ Additional detail about the selection probabilities is included in appendix table A-1.

example, average reading scores at the time of application were 573 for the treatment group and 570 for the control group.⁹ Similarly, 86 percent of the treatment group and 85 percent of the control group were African American, and 49 percent of both groups were female. None of these differences were “statistically significant.” A difference that is statistically significant is one that is likely not due to chance variation arising from the randomization process.

Data Sources

To estimate impacts, the study collected data on outcomes and characteristics of students, parents, and schools from a variety of sources (table 2). The program required parents (or guardians) to complete an application form to apply for a scholarship,¹⁰ and the application process included baseline (pre-program) testing of students in reading and mathematics by the evaluation team. As a result, the study had nearly complete data about students and families at the time of application. Parents were surveyed and students were surveyed and tested each year after the initial application. Appendix B provides details on the study’s approach for collecting data from parents and students.

Table 2. Data sources used to estimate impacts

Outcome	Source
Student achievement in reading and mathematics	<i>TerraNova Third Edition</i>
Parent satisfaction with school	Parent survey
Parent perceptions of school safety	
Parent involvement with education at school	
Parent involvement with education in the home	
Student satisfaction with school	Student survey, grades 4–12
Student perceptions of school safety	

For its academic achievement outcome, the study used reading and mathematics tests from the CTB/McGraw-Hill *TerraNova Third Edition*.¹¹ These nationally normed standardized tests are vertically aligned and available for grades K–12 (see section B-5 in the appendix for more information about the tests). Depending on a student’s grade level, the reading and mathematics tests took about 90 minutes to administer. Students were tested at the time of application, which provided a baseline test score that was used as an adjustment variable in estimating impacts.¹² Followup testing was conducted at the schools where students were enrolled in the spring of each year following application. For this report, which examines impacts two years after being offered or using a scholarship, testing took place during spring 2014 for the first cohort, in 2015 for the second cohort, and in 2016 for the third cohort (table 3). The

⁹ The *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics assessments were administered to students at the time of application.

¹⁰ Parents were asked to complete all application questions, and parents of pre-K students responding to survey items about satisfaction with their child’s school and perceptions of school safety may have been providing ratings for a range of settings including public preschool or home daycare.

¹¹ DC administers its own standardized assessment in grades 3 through 8 and, during the early years of the evaluation, was administering an assessment in grade 10. However, aspects of the study precluded using these test scores for this study: the OSP statute required the evaluation to use a nationally normed assessment (the DC one is not), private schools do not need to use the DC assessment, and the study has students in the entire K–12 grade range, which includes grades that do not administer the DC assessment.

¹² Random assignment yields groups of students who are equivalent in theory, but measuring achievement at the time of application adds considerable statistical power to the estimation and adjusts for differences between treatment and control groups that arise due to chance variation.

EVALUATION OF THE DC OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Impacts Two Years After Students Applied

spring data collection period was April to June and the number of days in the school year before each student was tested was taken into account in the measurement of program impacts.¹³

Table 3. Study cohorts and years tested

Cohort	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2016	Spring 2017
1	Application and lottery	Data Collection 1	Data Collection 2	Data Collection 3		
2		Application and lottery	Data Collection 1	Data Collection 2	Data Collection 3	
3			Application and lottery	Data Collection 1	Data Collection 2	Data Collection 3

The analysis presented in this report is based on students who completed tests in reading and mathematics, students who completed the student survey, and parents who completed the parent survey during the second year of followup data collection. The response rate was 71 percent for student tests, 74 percent for the parent survey, and 62 percent for the student survey.¹⁴ These rates are typical for studies that test students and survey parents, but nonetheless could affect the study's impact estimates if patterns of response differ between the group offered a scholarship and the group not offered a scholarship. Statistical tests of equivalence indicated that among respondents, there were few meaningful differences in characteristics at the time of application, such as household income or achievement, when comparing treatment and control group students and parents in this report's analysis of impacts after two years ("the second-year impact samples," see appendix tables A-4, A-5, and A-6).¹⁵ This means that comparing outcomes for the responding treatment and control group members should still provide valid estimates of the OSP's impacts. However, these are tests of the equivalence of *observed* characteristics of students and parents; unobserved characteristics could also differ. To estimate impacts for the program overall and not just for those who provided data in Year 2, the study constructed nonresponse weights to align characteristics of responding students and parents to characteristics of all students and parents at the

¹³ Of the students tested, the majority (97 percent) were tested during this window. For every student, the amount of time since the start of the school year and when they were tested was computed and this number was included in the impact models.

¹⁴ Response rates for the reading and mathematics tests were 77 percent for students in the treatment group and 64 percent for students in the control group. Response rates for the parent survey were 75 percent for the treatment group and 73 percent for the control group, after subsampling, and response rates for the student survey were 68 percent for the treatment group and 53 percent for the control group. Some of the response rate differentials fall outside of tolerance levels for randomized trials that the What Works Clearinghouse established (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>). Table A-3 in the appendix includes more detail about sample sizes and missing data for the study's outcomes and covariates. Appendix section C-3 reports tests of sensitivity of student-survey results to missing outcomes.

¹⁵ The study examined the extent of differences at application (baseline) between the treatment and control groups in the second-year impact sample following methods suggested by the What Works Clearinghouse. For each of 27 baseline characteristics measured, an effect size was calculated (difference between the treatment group average and the control group average, divided by a measure of how much the value of the characteristic varies across students or parents), then converted into an absolute value, and then they were averaged across the characteristics to create an average standardized baseline difference. These average differences were calculated for the reading test impact sample, the parent survey impact sample, and the student survey impact sample. The average standardized baseline differences were 5.1 percent, 5.8 percent, and 7.9 percent, respectively. In line with What Works Clearinghouse's recommendation that studies adjust for baseline differences when differences fall in the range of 5 to 25 percent, the study's regression models included baseline characteristics as covariates.

time of application and used them for the impact analyses (see appendix B for details on how the study constructed weights).¹⁶

Approach for Measuring Impacts

The study's approach for estimating impacts was to model an outcome after application to the OSP (e.g., mathematics achievement) as a function of student baseline (pre-OSP) test scores and student and parent characteristics (all of which are "covariates" in the model), and whether the student received an offer of a scholarship.¹⁷ This estimate is referred to as the *intent-to-treat* impact. The offer of a scholarship created an "intent" for a student to be treated, which in this context means using the scholarship to attend a participating private school. A variant of the model was used to estimate impacts for the safety and satisfaction outcomes. These outcomes take on a value of either 0 or 1 and require different estimation techniques than for test scores, but the models include the same covariates.¹⁸ Impacts for subgroups of students and parents were estimated in a similar way. Additional detail is presented in appendix B.

The study used the intent-to-treat impact as a basis for estimating the impact of using the scholarship, referred to as the *treatment-on-treated* impact. The legislation calls for the study to report this impact as well. The study used a straightforward adjustment procedure attributed to Bloom (1984), which involved dividing the intent-to-treat impact by the proportion of students who used scholarships.¹⁹ For the main analyses, the study defined scholarship "use" to be any use during the two years after applying for the scholarship. A more detailed discussion of this definition of use rates is provided in section C-2 in the appendix. As the appendix notes, the concept of "using" a scholarship becomes more nuanced over longer periods. Some students use a scholarship only briefly while others use it for longer durations. Appendix C looks at the implications of defining "use" to be using a scholarship at any time during the two years compared with using it each semester of the two years.

Because scale scores and impact effect sizes are difficult to interpret, this report presents findings for student test scores in terms of average differences in percentiles. The overall percentile difference was found by computing percentile differences at each grade level, and then weighting those differences by the proportion of the student sample at each grade level.²⁰ The OSP impact is depicted as the difference

¹⁶ Weights also were constructed to adjust for the probability of selection into the treatment group (i.e., when it is not 50 percent) and to account for special efforts to collect outcome data from subsamples of nonrespondents to improve response rates. These weights are described in appendix section B-6.

¹⁷ See appendix section B-3 for a full list of the covariates used in the model and a comparison of results from using non-linear models to estimate test score impacts.

¹⁸ Although impacts on "binary" outcomes (those that take on only two values) are often estimated using logistic models, researchers increasingly use linear probability models because in practice they yield the same results but the results are easier to interpret. The study estimated and compared both types of models and found the same direction of results and levels of statistical significance.

¹⁹ For example, if half the students used their scholarship and the intent-to-treat impact was 10, the treatment-on-treated impact would be 20—the intent-to-treat impact of 10 divided by the scholarship use rate of 50 percent. The study considered an Instrumental Variables approach but found that estimates were very similar to estimates obtained using the Bloom adjustment, so the more straightforward method was used (see appendix section B-3 for more information).

²⁰ The models estimated impacts using scale scores rather than percentiles, which is why this change in percentiles is referred to as a depiction of the impact. Appendix section B-4 provides details on how the study computed percentile differences.

in average percentiles for the treatment group and the control group. Additional details on scale score findings, including p -values and effect sizes, are presented in appendix A.

Limitations

It is appropriate to use some care in interpreting and applying the findings from this evaluation. Studies that administer surveys over time often face challenges with response rates. In this evaluation, the proportion of students in grades 4 and above who completed the student surveys was relatively low, and the rates differed for those offered and not offered scholarships. Therefore, findings for school satisfaction and perceptions of safety among students should be interpreted with caution. Response rates for other outcomes based on student test scores and parent surveys were higher; however, nonresponse always needs to be acknowledged when interpreting findings.

When considering these findings, it is important to note that impacts reported here are from the second year during which students could have used their scholarships. Also, the OSP operates in DC, where the majority of families already exercise school choice.²¹ In this setting, the evaluation is assessing the impacts of adding a private-school option to a set of existing choice options. It is not assessing the impacts of attending private school compared with attending an assigned traditional public school. The evaluation also is not assessing the impacts of “school choice” in general, which is not possible in a setting in which school choice already is prevalent. In addition, the OSP is the only federally funded voucher program. The combination of elements—a program whose funding and support has shifted over time at the federal level, operating within a city that offers ample options for parents to choose schools—makes findings from this evaluation challenging to generalize to other settings, such as voucher programs operated statewide or in settings that currently have limited choice options. However, the evaluation’s findings have a high degree of validity when viewed within the context of DC.

²¹ In 2012, 75 percent of public school students in DC attended a school that was not their assigned neighborhood school (21st Century School Fund, 2014).

3. Characteristics of the Program, Students, and Schools

Information about how the OSP operates, and the students and schools that participate in it, provides important context for understanding its effectiveness. The specific characteristics of the program differ from that of other voucher programs, in ways that could influence the kinds of families and private schools that participate and how the program does or does not benefit participants.

Program Features

The SOAR Act requires the OSP to be operated through a federal grant to a local entity, and to be supervised by the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement, and the Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia. In August 2015, the Department awarded a 3-year grant to a DC-based nonprofit organization, Serving Our Children, to implement the OSP. Another nonprofit, the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust, administered the OSP between 2011 and August 2015.

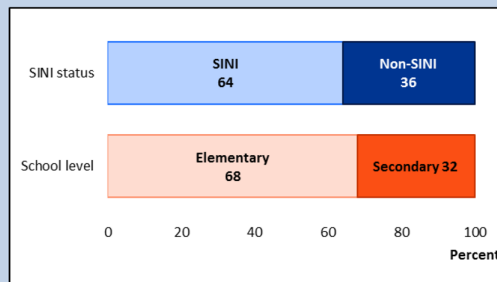
The operator is responsible for ensuring that participating schools meet reporting requirements and financial responsibilities. Schools must provide accreditation information, ensure that teachers in core subjects have a baccalaureate degree or higher, and assure compliance with the statute's language prohibiting discrimination against applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or sex. Schools also have to have financial systems and procedures, and submit proof of adequate financial resources if the school has been operating for five years or less. The operator of the program also is responsible for setting up the application process, recruiting applicants and schools, awarding scholarships, and monitoring awardees and schools. The SOAR Act does not specify that monitoring should take into account the academic performance of participating private schools or of OSP students in the schools.

Families apply for the scholarship and the program operator determines their eligibility (see exhibit 1 in chapter 1). Eligible families that receive scholarship offers then decide which participating private schools—if any—they will apply to, and those schools decide if applying families meet their admissions criteria, which schools set on their own. The legislation expressly states that participating schools do not have to alter or change their tuition or their admission criteria for OSP scholarship students. Students can be offered a scholarship but not be admitted to a private school they want to attend. There is also no obligation to use the scholarship, and families with children admitted to one or more participating private schools can elect to attend public schools (or nonparticipating private schools) instead. Eligible families that do not receive scholarship offers also can apply for and attend participating private schools, but receive no scholarship support.

Characteristics of Students Applying to the OSP

Characteristics of all eligible program applicants in 2012, 2013, and 2014 (the students included in the OSP evaluation) are consistent with the “purpose” and “priorities” sections in the SOAR Act. For example, consistent with the program’s eligibility requirements, all students are from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line. A large proportion of students (42 percent) were living in wards 7 and 8 in southeast DC, which are the lowest-income wards in the District. Most were below the national average in reading and mathematics: at the time of application, the average applicant scored at the 32nd percentile in mathematics and the 34th percentile in reading on the study-administered assessment. Reflecting the program’s priority to serve students in low-performing schools, the majority of students were enrolled in SINI schools when they applied for the scholarship (64 percent, compared with 36 percent enrolled in non-SINI schools) (figure 1).

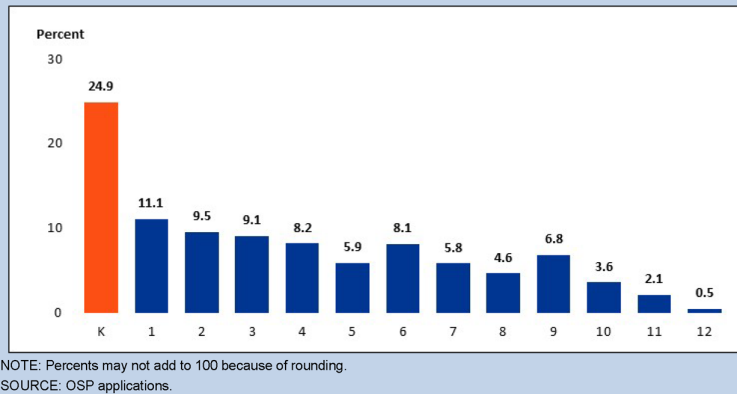
Figure 1. Percentage of eligible program applicants, by SINI status and school grade level at time of application



SOURCE: OSP applications.

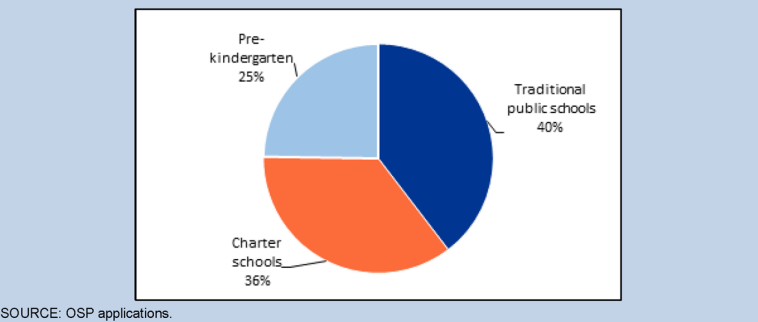
The Act itself did not have a priority to serve younger children, but students were disproportionately entering early elementary school grades at the time of application. Sixty-eight percent of applicants were entering elementary grades (K–5) compared with 32 percent entering secondary grades (6–12) (figure 1) and one-quarter were entering kindergarten at the time of application (figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of eligible applicants, by entering grade level at time of application



At the time of application, students were roughly split between attending traditional public schools (40 percent) and charter schools (36 percent), with an additional 25 percent attending pre-kindergarten (figure 3).²²

Figure 3. Percentage of eligible applicants, by school type at time of application

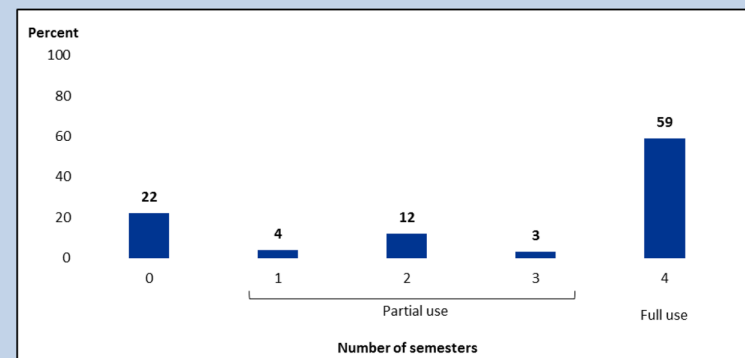


²² Students attending pre-kindergarten may have been in preschools operating in traditional public schools, private schools, or other settings, including programs operated by nonprofit organizations.

Student Participation in the Program

Students who received an *offer* of a scholarship (applicants assigned to the treatment group) could decline to use it at all, use it intermittently, say, for one or two semesters, or use it fully. For this report, examining the impacts two years after students and families applied to the OSP, “full use” is defined as using a scholarship for all four semesters, “partial use” as some of the four semesters, and “no use” as none of the semesters. Because the extent of participation is most relevant for understanding program impacts, the participation rates reported here are for the sample of students in the second-year impact sample. ²³ Among the second-year impact sample of treatment group students, most (59 percent) were full users, some were partial users (19 percent), and some did not use it at all (22 percent)²⁴ (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of treatment group students in the second-year impact sample using the scholarship after application, by number of semesters



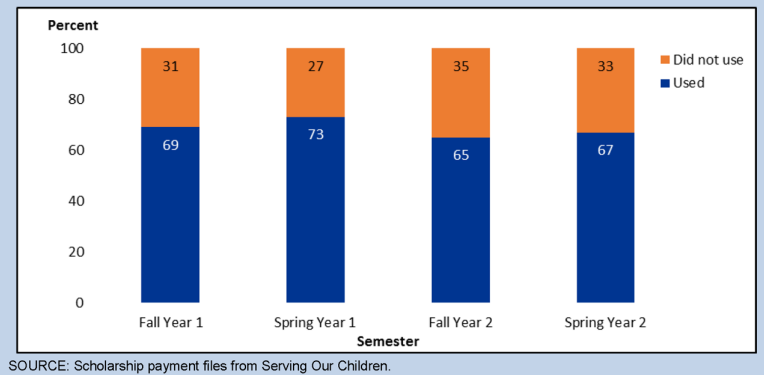
SOURCE: Scholarship payment files from Serving Our Children.

Another way to examine use is to consider the proportion of scholarships used in each of the four semesters over two years. These proportions stay relatively constant over time (figure 5), varying between 65 and 73 percent of students.

²³ In this section, the second-year impact sample consists of students who completed a reading achievement test in the second year of followup after applying for a scholarship.

²⁴ Using a scholarship “fully” also could be considered as spending the entire awarded amount. We are not considering “use” in that sense.

Figure 5. Percentage of treatment group students in the second-year impact sample using the scholarship after application, by semester



School Characteristics

The kinds of schools that participate in the OSP and that students attend—both those offered a scholarship (the treatment group) and those not offered a scholarship (the control group)—may influence the impact of the OSP. The study identified the school that students were attending in the spring of the second year after applying for a scholarship.

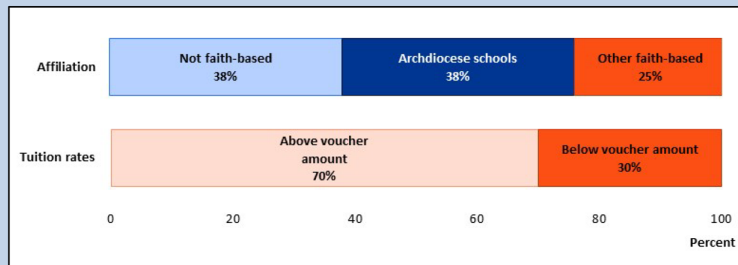
Private Schools Participating in the OSP

Private schools participating in the OSP can play a role in the effectiveness of the program, though where students who are offered a scholarship ultimately enroll depends on their families' preferences and the private schools' admissions criteria. During the period corresponding to the second year of followup for this study, the number of private schools participating in the OSP declined from 52 (in the 2013–14 school year) to 49 (in the 2015–16 school year).²⁵ Of the schools that participated in the OSP in any of the three years (2013–14, 2014–15, or 2015–16), 62 percent were religiously affiliated, and 38 percent were Catholic schools operating within the Archdiocese of Washington (figure 6). Among participating schools, 70 percent had published tuition rates above the maximum voucher amount.²⁶

²⁵This is a net change. A small number of schools began participating, stopped participating, or closed during this time period.

²⁶Among schools where the published tuition rates exceeded scholarship amounts, the average difference was \$13,310 (ranging from \$177 to \$31,519). Tuition amounts used here are ones posted by schools, which can offer other kinds of aid to defray tuition costs. The study's data do not include how much tuition OSP participants actually paid.

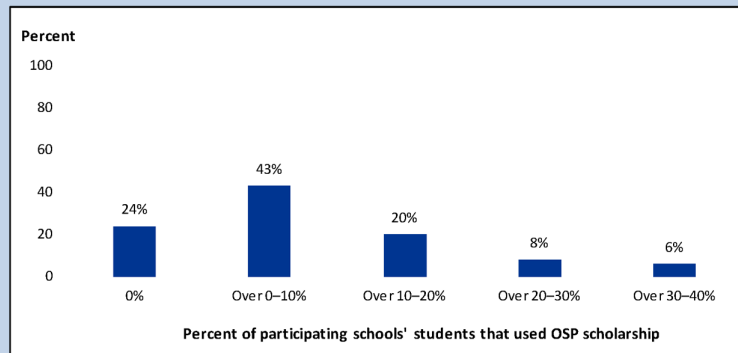
Figure 6. Percentage of participating private schools, by religious affiliation and tuition rates



NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding. Information presented reflects the 53 private schools that participated in OSP during at least one of the 3 years (2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16).
 SOURCE: Religious affiliation is from the NCES Private School Survey, 2013–14. Information about tuition rates for OSP participating schools was obtained from the Participating School Directory, published in 2015–16 by Serving Our Children and in 2013–14 and 2014–15 by DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation.

The proportion of voucher students in participating private schools provides a sense of the extent to which these schools rely on vouchers.²⁷ On average, OSP students represented 8 percent of enrollment in participating private schools, but the proportion varied widely between schools. During the 2013–14 school year, in 24 percent of participating private schools, there were no OSP students at all, and in 14 percent of participating schools, OSP students represented 21–40 percent of total enrollment (figure 7).

Figure 7. Percentage of participating private schools, by the share of OSP students enrolled in their school



SOURCE: NCES Private School Survey, 2013–14 (or 2011–12 or school website); scholarship payment files from Serving Our Children.

²⁷ An alternate approach would be to analyze the share of revenue private schools receive from vouchers, which Hangerman et al. (2017) did for Milwaukee private schools. However, that study relied on data that are not available to this study.

Types of Schools Attended by Students in the Treatment and Control Groups

Students in the control group were most likely to be attending a traditional public school (47 percent) or a charter school (43 percent), but 10 percent were attending a private school that was participating in the OSP (table 4).²⁸ The large percentage of control group students attending charter schools is consistent with the size of the charter school sector in DC, which in 2013 enrolled 43 percent of DC public school students and 36 percent of all DC students (Betts, Dynarski, and Feldman 2016). While most students in the treatment group were attending a private school (68 percent), one-third of these students (32 percent) had never used or were no longer using the scholarship offered to them and were attending a public school, evenly split between traditional public and charter schools (16 percent in each type).

Table 4. Percentage of study participants in the second-year impact sample, by school type, two years after applying to the program

School type	Percent of students	
	Treatment group	Control group
Traditional public	16	47
Charter	16	43
Participating private	68	10

NOTE: Percent of students attending non-participating private schools was excluded from the table because of small sample size. The sample was weighted by the inverse of the probability of being selected in the lottery.

SOURCE: School type is obtained at followup testing for students in the second-year impact sample.

Within the two years after applying to the OSP, students can start out in one type of school and end up in another, and their outcomes in the second year likely reflect the accumulation of school experiences. For example, a student could attend a traditional public school one year and a charter school the next. However, most students attended the same type of school in both years (table 5). For example, 79 percent of the treatment group attended the same type of school in both years (most were attending participating private schools), and 81 percent of the control group attended the same type of school for both years (most were attending traditional public schools and charter schools). Of the students who changed schools, the most common pattern for control group students was moving between traditional public and charter schools (9 percent), and, for treatment group students, moving between participating private and either traditional public (7 percent) or charter schools (5 percent).

²⁸ Of the students in the control group who were attending an OSP participating private school, 40 percent had a sibling who was in the treatment group and also attending an OSP participating school.

Table 5. School attendance patterns during the first two years for students in the second-year impact sample

School type	Percent of students	
	Treatment group	Control group
Stayed in same type of school	79	81
Traditional public both years	11	38
Charter both years	11	36
Participating private both years	57	6
Changed type of school	15	12
Traditional public and charter	2	9
Traditional public and participating private	7	2
Charter and participating private	5	1
School type in first year is not known	6	7

SOURCE: School type is obtained at followup testing for students in the second-year impact sample.

Characteristics of Schools Attended by Students in Treatment and Control Groups

Data from surveys of school principals provide more insight from the school level about differences treatment and control group students experienced (table 6).²⁹ Compared with students in the control group, students in the treatment group attended schools where principals reported:

- Lower enrollment and lower pupil-staff ratios. For example, school enrollment averaged 274.0 for students in the treatment group and 393.5 for students in the control group.
- Lower use of some school safety measures. For example, 42.2 percent of schools attended by students in the treatment reported daily presence of police or security staff, compared with 73.9 percent of schools attended by students in the control group.
- More hours per week of school time (1.4 hours more), but less instructional time in reading and mathematics (about 1 hour less per week in each subject).
- More frequent tests given by reading and mathematics teachers. For example, among schools attended by students in the treatment group, 88.5 percent of principals reported that testing in mathematics occurred weekly or more often, compared with 75.3 percent of principals at schools attended by students in the control group.
- More availability of instructional programs for advanced learners or talented/gifted students (54.7 percent offered, compared with 43.7 percent).
- Less availability of instructional programs for students with learning disabilities (69.8 percent compared with 90.2 percent) and students learning English (50.1 percent compared with 69.7 percent).

²⁹ The study administered principal surveys to all schools in DC to collect comparable data for public and private schools. Note that these estimates are affected by the number of students in the study who attended a school. If many students in the study attended large private schools, average enrollment in table 6 will be larger than average enrollment in all participating private schools. Similarly, if many students in the control group attended large public schools, average enrollment in schools that these students attended will be larger than average enrollment in DC public schools.

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- More availability of differentiated instruction (86.5 percent of schools offered, compared with 81.0 percent).

These average differences in school characteristics are an indication that school environments and instructional experiences differed for the two groups of students.

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Table 6. Characteristics of schools that students in the second-year impact sample attended, two years after application

Characteristic	Treatment group average	Control group average
Enrollment	274.0	393.5*
Percent African American	74.2%	73.0%
Percent Hispanic	16.1%	19.1%*
Pupil-staff ratio	10.6	11.0*
Safety measures		
Process for screening students using metal detectors	16.2	24.1*
All or most of the students are required to stay on school grounds during lunch	98.1	98.0
Drug sweeps	5.5	6.5
Daily presence of police or security persons	42.2	73.9*
Video surveillance	70.2	90.6*
Mean suspension rate	7.3%	7.7%
Weekly instructional time (in hours)		
Length of typical school week	32.2	30.8*
Time in mathematics instruction	5.2	6.1*
Time in reading instruction	6.2	7.2*
Frequency of testing English, reading, or language arts skills of students[†]		
More than once a week	21.3%	12.9%
Weekly	65.9	60.9
Monthly or less often	12.8	26.3
Frequency of testing arithmetic or mathematics skills of students[†]		
More than once a week	18.4%	16.0%
Weekly	70.1	59.3
Monthly or less often	11.4	24.8
Availability of instructional programs for		
Advanced learners or talented/gifted students	54.7%	43.7%*
Students with learning disabilities	69.8	90.2*
Non-English speakers	50.1	69.7*
Individual tutors available to students in school	71.7%	67.0%
Differentiated instruction[†]		
School offers differentiated courses in core curriculum but students have open access to any course provided they have taken the required prerequisite(s).	22.5%	19.8%
School offers differentiated courses and does differentiated grouping in core curriculum	64.0	61.2
School offers a variety of undifferentiated courses in core curriculum and students have open access to any course provided they have taken the required prerequisite(s)	13.5	19.0

* Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

[†]Tests for statistical significance were conducted using a chi-square test and the difference between groups is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: The number of schools providing data for this table varied by characteristic, ranging from 182 to 231 schools. For the treatment group, the number of schools ranged from 149 to 185, and for the control group it ranged from 153 to 194 schools. Because some schools enrolled students from both the control and treatment groups, they contributed to the school characteristics for both groups. School characteristics were weighted by the proportion of students in the study sample attending. Each student was assigned characteristics of their school in the relevant year.

SOURCE: Data for average enrollment, pupil-staff ratio, and race/ethnicity are from the NCES Private School Survey, 2013–14 (for private schools) and from the Common Core of Data, 2013–14 (for public schools). Data for safety measures, suspensions, frequency of testing, instructional programs, tutoring, and differentiation are from the study's principal survey, two years after application. Characteristics for private schools may differ from those previously reported because some participating private schools did not enroll any OSP students, which gives them a weight of zero for these characteristics.

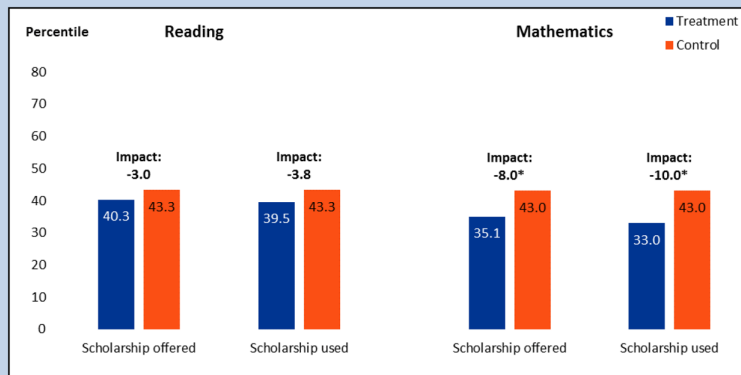
4. Impacts on Key Outcomes

Impacts on Reading and Mathematics Achievement

Improving academic achievement is a clear goal of the SOAR Act. The legislation notes public school students in DC perform well below national averages on reading and mathematics tests and gives priority in the OSP to serving students attending schools in need of academic improvement. The Act also requires that the evaluation measure the impact of the OSP on achievement and specifies the use of a standardized test to assess it.³⁰

Overall, students who were offered or used an OSP scholarship had significantly lower mathematics test scores but not reading test scores two years after applying to the program. Students in the group that received a scholarship offer scored 8.0 percentile points lower on the mathematics test and 3.0 percentile points lower on the reading test than students in the control group (figure 8) after two years. The difference in mathematics scores was statistically significant and the difference in reading scores was not.³¹

Figure 8. Impacts on reading and mathematics achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



* Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 612 treatment group students and 389 control group students for reading, and 609 treatment group students and 387 control group students for mathematics.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

³⁰ PL 112-10, Sec. 3009(a)(2)(B)(i) requires the evaluation to measure the impact of the program on student achievement. Sec. 3009(a)(3)(A) requires the use of a norm-referenced standardized test.

³¹ It is common for studies to report the magnitudes of impacts using effect sizes, of which the most common is the ratio of the estimated impact to the standard deviation of the outcome. In this context, reading and mathematics scores effect sizes are -0.09 and -0.12. Appendix A presents these impacts and their associated effect sizes.

Students *using* a scholarship scored 10.0 percentile points lower on the mathematics test, a difference that was statistically significant, and 3.8 percentile points lower on the reading test than students in the control group, a difference that was not statistically significant.

It is important to note that students in both the treatment and the control groups scored higher on the tests two years later than they did at the time of application. The impacts were negative because the gains in test scores for the treatment group were smaller than the gains in test scores for the control group. An analogy is to a footrace—all students are running forward but the control group students are running faster.

The pattern of impacts on achievement two years after students applied to the OSP were similar to the patterns one year after (negative impacts on mathematics scores and no statistically significant impacts on reading scores, see Dynarski et. al 2017). The size of the negative mathematics impact in the second year is 8.4 percentile points compared with 5.4 percentile points in the first year but the difference is not statistically significant (see appendix section C-4 for additional details about the analysis done to compare impacts).³²

Student Subgroups: Previously Attended a SINI or non-SINI School

Among those in the high-priority group of students who previously attended a low-performing SINI school, students who were offered or used an OSP scholarship had significantly lower mathematics test scores but not reading test scores relative to students who did not receive the offer two years later. The proportion of all students who were enrolled in a SINI school when they initially applied for the scholarship was 69 percent.³³ For students offered the scholarship, mathematics scores were 6.8 percentile points lower and reading scores were 1.9 percentile points lower two years later, compared with students who did not receive the offer (figure 9 and figure 10). The negative impact (difference in test scores) of scholarship use was 8.5 percentile points in mathematics and 2.5 percentile points in reading.³⁴

Similarly, among those in the lower-priority group of students who previously attended a non-SINI school, students who were offered or used an OSP scholarship had significantly lower mathematics test scores but not reading test scores, relative to students who did not receive the offer two years later. Fewer than one third (31 percent) of students were enrolled in a non-SINI school when they applied to the OSP. For those students, ones offered the scholarship had mathematics scores

³² An additional question of interest is whether or not student mobility may help explain the negative impacts. That is, students in the treatment group have to change schools in order to take advantage of an OSP scholarship offer, and there is some research suggesting that school mobility can negatively influence academic achievement. The first impact report examined the role of mobility in relation to achievement outcomes and did not find that mobility helped to explain the negative impacts observed one year after students applied to the program (Dynarski et. al 2017). Although some school transfer did occur between the first and second years after application, patterns of mobility will be more evident after three years, and may be explored in the study's final report.

³³ This percentage is based on students in the second-year impact sample and differs from the 64 percent reported in chapter 3, which was based on all eligible program applicants.

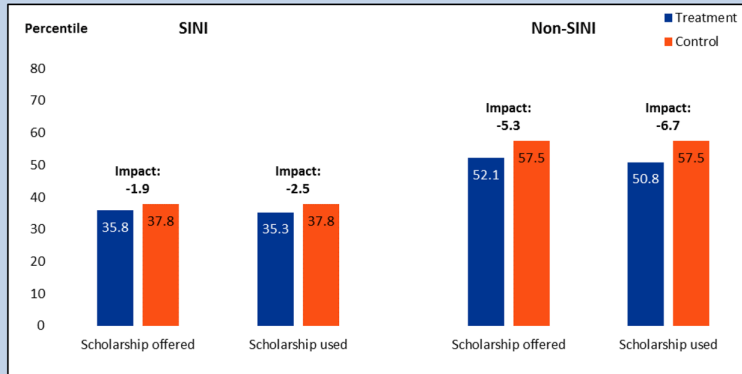
³⁴ Another perspective for examining subgroup impacts is to compare impacts of two subgroups and test whether differences between impacts are statistically significant. The question is not whether a subgroup impact was significant but whether it differs from the impact for the other group. Results of these tests are reported in the figure notes.

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10.9 percentile points lower and reading scores 5.3 percentile points lower two years later, compared with students who did not receive the offer (figure 9 and figure 10). The negative impact of scholarship use was 13.6 percentile points in mathematics scores and 6.7 percentile points in reading.

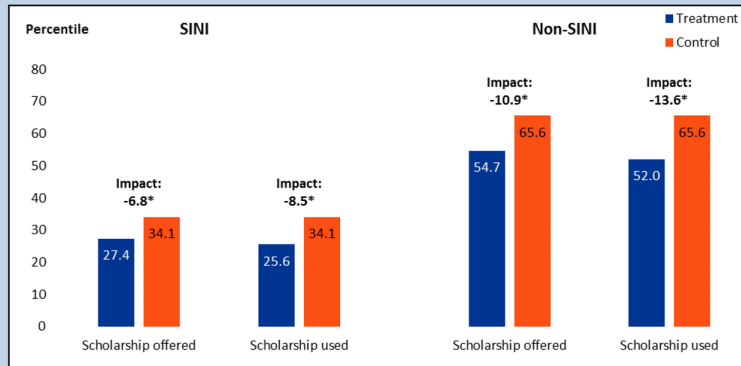
Figure 9. Impacts on reading achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students previously attending SINI and non-SINI schools, in second year



NOTE: At the time of application for the scholarship, students were attending a SINI school. Because students entering kindergarten could not be categorized as attending SINI schools, the analysis included them in the non-SINI group. Appendix C reports on a sensitivity analysis the study conducted in which kindergarten students were excluded from the analysis. Sample size is 446 treatment group students and 244 control group students for reading in SINI, and 166 treatment group students and 145 control group students for reading in non-SINI schools.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Figure 10. Impacts on mathematics achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students previously attending SINI and non-SINI schools, in second year



* Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: At the time of application for the scholarship, students were attending a SINI school. Because students entering kindergarten could not be categorized as attending SINI schools, the analysis included them in the non-SINI group. Appendix C reports on a sensitivity analysis the study conducted in which kindergarten students were excluded from the analysis. Sample size is 445 treatment group students and 243 control group students for mathematics in SINI, and 164 treatment group students and 144 control group students for mathematics in non-SINI schools.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Student Subgroups: Grade Level

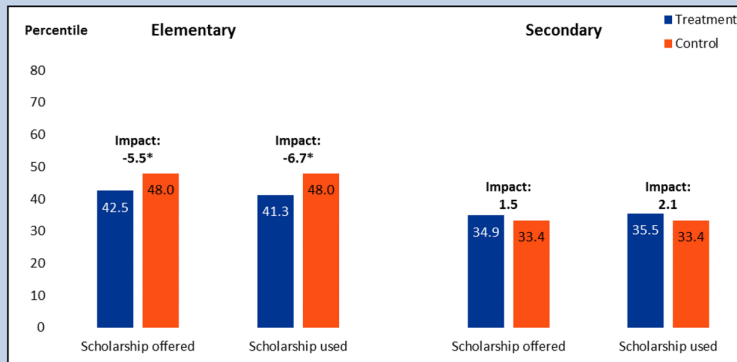
Students entering elementary grades (K–5) at the time of application who were offered or used an OSP scholarship experienced statistically significant negative impacts in both reading and mathematics relative to students who did not receive the offer two years after applying to the program. The proportion of all students entering elementary grades at the time of application was 68 percent. For students offered the scholarship, the negative impact on their reading scores was 5.5 percentile points (figure 11) and the negative impact on their mathematics scores was 11.3 percentile points (figure 12), compared with students not offered the scholarship. The negative impact of scholarship use for students in elementary grades was 6.7 percentile points in reading and 13.9 percentile points in mathematics (figure 11 and figure 12).

Students entering secondary grades (6–12) at the time of application who were offered or used an OSP scholarship did not experience statistically significant impacts on test scores in reading or mathematics relative to students who did not receive the offer two years later. The proportion of all students entering secondary grades at the time of application was 32 percent. For students offered the scholarship, reading scores were 1.5 percentile points higher (figure 11) and mathematics scores were 2.7 percentile points lower (figure 12). The impacts of scholarship use for

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students in grades 6–12 were also positive in reading (2.1 percentile points) and negative in mathematics (3.6 percentile points), but not statistically significant.

Figure 11. Impacts on reading achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students at elementary and secondary schools, in second year

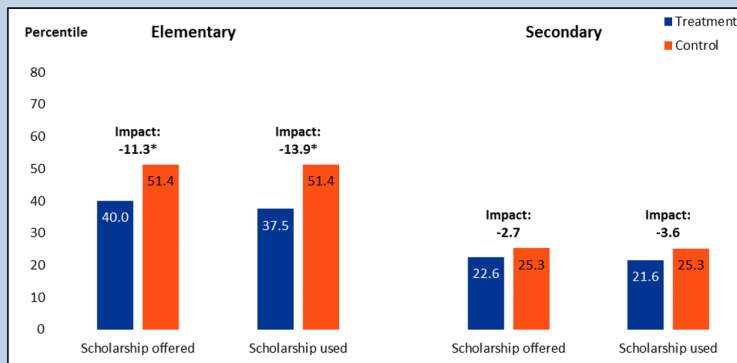


*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 409 treatment group students and 271 control group students for reading in elementary grades, and 203 treatment group students and 118 control group students for reading in secondary grades.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Figure 12. Impacts on mathematics achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students at elementary and secondary schools, in second year



*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

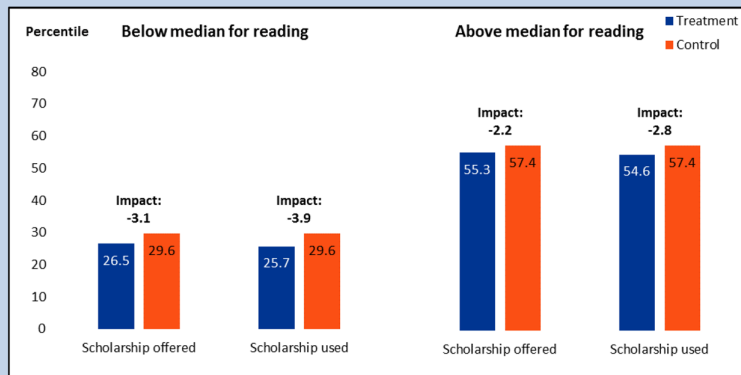
NOTE: Sample size is 408 treatment group students and 270 control group students for mathematics in elementary grades, and 201 treatment group students and 117 control group students for mathematics in secondary grades.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Student Subgroups: High and Low Achievement

Two years later, there were significant negative impacts in mathematics for some students grouped by whether they were performing above or below the median in reading and mathematics when they applied to the program.³⁵ Grouping students this way creates four subgroups, two for reading and two for mathematics. The OSP did not have a significant impact on reading for any of the four subgroups (figures 13 and 14). For three of the four subgroups there were significant negative impacts on mathematics test scores: for students above the median in reading, students below the median in mathematics, and students above the median in mathematics (figures 15 and 16).

Figure 13. Impacts on reading achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students below and above median for reading achievement at time of application, in second year

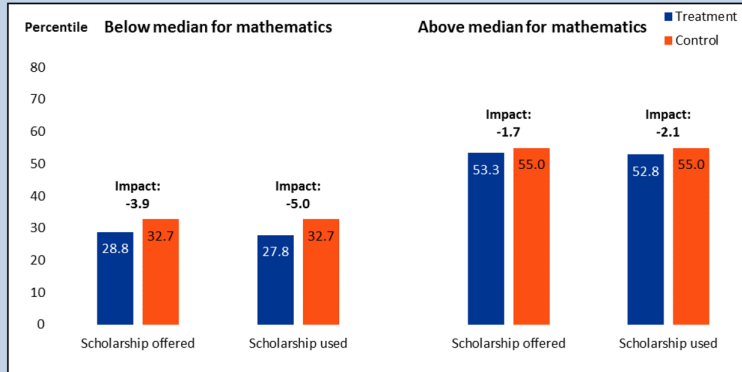


NOTE: Sample size is 300 treatment group students and 186 control group students below median for reading, and 312 treatment group students and 203 control group students for above median in reading.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

³⁵ Median refers to the median level of performance in reading and mathematics for study participants at each grade level at the time of application.

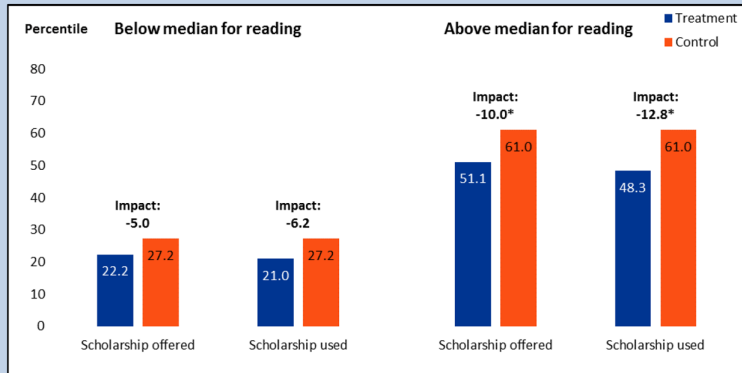
Figure 14. Impacts on reading achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students below and above median for mathematics achievement at time of application, in second year



NOTE: Sample size is 300 treatment group students and 191 control group students below median for mathematics, and 312 treatment group students and 198 control group students for above median in mathematics.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Figure 15. Impacts on mathematics achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students below and above median for reading achievement at time of application, in second year

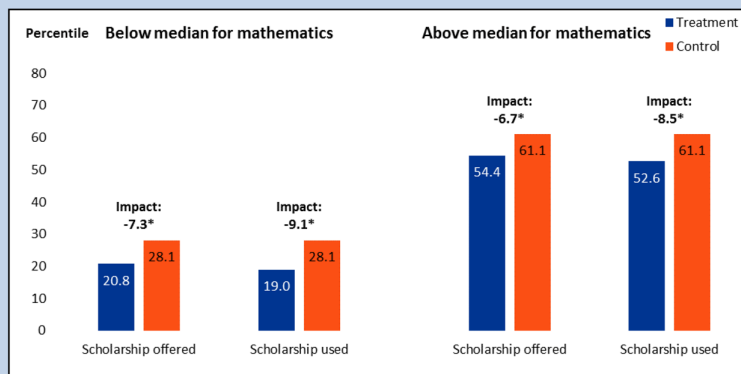


*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 299 treatment group students and 184 control group students below median for reading, and 310 treatment group students and 203 control group students for above median in reading.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Figure 16. Impacts on mathematics achievement (percentile scores) for scholarship offer and use, for students below and above median for mathematics achievement at time of application, in second year



*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 299 treatment group students and 189 control group students below median for mathematics, and 310 treatment group students and 198 control group students for above median in mathematics.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Percentiles were calculated using grade-level norms and scale scores. The study administered the *TerraNova Third Edition*, reading and mathematics tests to DC students participating in the OSP evaluation, two years after application.

Impacts on Parent and Student Satisfaction

The OSP legislation calls for the study to look at parent and student satisfaction with the school. Recent research has shown that parents are more satisfied if they choose their child's school (Barrows et al. 2017; Grady and Bielick 2010). However, that research also has shown that, on average, parents report being very satisfied with the school their child attends, regardless of type. This study compares satisfaction levels of parents and students in the treatment group, most of whom attend private schools but some of whom attend traditional public and charter schools, and parents and students in the control group, most of whom attend traditional public and charter schools but some of whom attend private schools. Both groups include parents who have exercised choice.

The study administered surveys annually to parents and students in grades 4–12 to gauge satisfaction with the school that the student was attending. For the primary measure of satisfaction, best aligned with what is called for in the OSP legislation, parents and students were asked to grade the school using a range from A to F. For this analysis, parent and student responses that gave the school a grade of A or B were grouped into one category and all other responses were grouped into the other category.

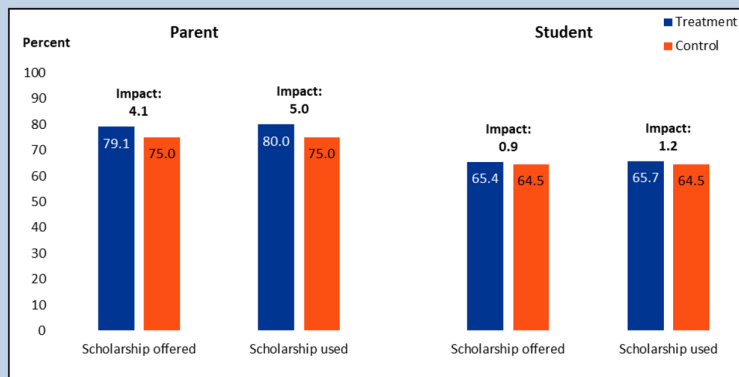
The program did not have a statistically significant impact on parents' or students' general satisfaction with the child's school two years after applying to the program. The proportion of

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parents giving their child’s school an A or B was 4.1 percentage points higher for parents of students offered the scholarship, compared with parents of students not offered the scholarship, 79.1 percent compared with 75.0 percent (figure 17). The difference was not statistically significant. Students’ general satisfaction was 0.9 percentage points higher, with 65.4 percent of students offered the scholarship giving their school an A or B compared with 64.5 percent of students not offered the scholarship; the difference was not statistically significant. Similarly, scholarship use had no statistically significant impact on parent or student general satisfaction.

There were few statistically significant impacts on school satisfaction for parent and student subgroups two years later. Of the eight subgroup impacts estimated for parent satisfaction (SINI, non-SINI, elementary students, secondary students, reading performance below or above the median, mathematics performance below or above the median), two were statistically significant. Among parents whose children were above the median in reading and among parents whose children were above the median in mathematics, the OSP had positive impacts on general satisfaction. Of the eight subgroup impacts for student satisfaction, none was statistically significant (appendix table A-10).

Figure 17. Impacts on parent and student general satisfaction (percentage giving school an A or B grade) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



NOTE: Sample size is 569 treatment group parents and 382 control group parents. Sample size is 331 treatment group students and 196 control group students.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from study’s regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent and student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

The findings reported above are different from the results from a previous OSP evaluation conducted between 2005 and 2010 (Wolf et al. 2008) that found positive and statistically significant impacts on parents’ satisfaction two years after applying to the program. However, research previously cited suggests that parents are typically more satisfied if they have chosen their child’s school, and as discussed earlier in this report, DC now offers many options for school choice. In fact, when exercising

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choice is defined as attending a charter school, a private school, or a traditional public school other than the child's assigned neighborhood school,³⁶ 71 percent of parents in the control group can be thought of as having chosen their child's school, compared with 89 percent of the treatment group (table 7). Moreover, the current study has found that choosing a school was associated with being satisfied, regardless of whether parents were in the treatment or control groups. Specifically, when parents chose schools, the percentage of them giving the schools a grade of A or B rose by 21 percentage points, compared with their school rating at the time of OSP application in the treatment group, and by 24 percentage points in the control group. When parents did not choose schools, there was no statistically significant increase in satisfaction for treatment or control group parents (table 7). (See appendix section C-5 for additional details and a formal statistical analysis using mediation techniques.)

Table 7. Percentage of parents giving their child's school a grade of A or B, by whether they exercised choice

	Percent of parents giving school an A or B at time of application	Percent of parents giving school an A or B at time of followup two years later	Change in percentage	Percent of group
Treatment group	61	80	19*	100
Exercised choice	61	82	21*	89
Did not exercise choice	61	67	6	11
Control group	56	75	19*	100
Exercised choice	53	77	24*	71
Did not exercise choice	61	68	7	29

* Difference between percentage at time of application and two years later is significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 588 treatment group parents and 404 control group parents.

SOURCE: Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

Another hypothesis for the lack of impact on parents' general satisfaction may be that participating in the OSP improved satisfaction with some school dimensions and not others. In addition to the overall general satisfaction rating, the parent survey included a secondary measure asking them to report on their satisfaction with specific aspects of their child's school. Parents of students in the treatment group were more satisfied than parents of students in the control group with certain, but not all aspects, of the child's current school. Appendix table C-7 presents the full set of secondary parent satisfaction items.

Impacts on Parent and Student Perceptions of School Safety

The OSP legislation indicates that one purpose of the program is to address shortfalls in DC's public school safety, and it calls for the study to look at parent and student perceptions of school safety. The annual surveys of parents and students in grades 4–12 ask about their perception of how safe the school is. For the primary measure of safety, best aligned with what is called for in the OSP legislation,

³⁶ It may be the case that some parents deliberately choose for their children to attend their neighborhood schools, even when other options are available. However, the study did not have data available to categorize such parents as having exercised choice.

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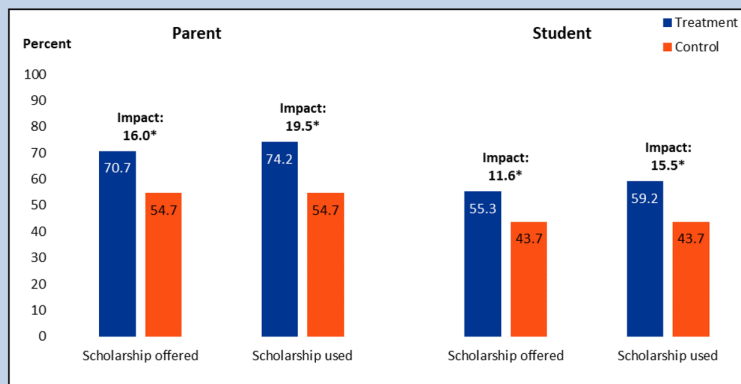
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parents and students were asked to rate the school as very safe, somewhat safe, or not safe. For this analysis, parent and student responses rating the school as very safe were compared with all others.

Two years after applying to the program, parents of students offered or using the scholarship and the students themselves were significantly more likely to say their school was very safe relative to their counterparts in the control group. The proportion of parents indicating their child's school was very safe was 16.0 percentage points higher for parents of students offered the scholarship (70.7 percent) compared with parents of students not offered the scholarship (54.7 percent). The difference is statistically significant (figure 18). The percentage of students indicating their school is very safe was 11.6 percentage points higher for students offered the scholarship than for those not offered the scholarship, 55.3 percent compared with 43.7 percent, and the difference is statistically significant. The positive impact of scholarship use on general perceptions of school safety was 19.5 percentage points for parents and 15.5 percentage points for students.

In addition to general ratings of school safety, students responded to secondary questions about the frequency of specific safety-related incidents at school (e.g., being bullied, being threatened with violence, having things stolen, and being offered drugs). There were no statistically significant differences between the treatment and control group students on any of these items. Appendix table C-8 presents the full set of secondary student survey items related to school safety.

Figure 18. Impacts on parent and student general perceptions of school safety (percentage rating school as very safe) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: Sample size is 566 treatment group parents and 370 control group parents. Sample size is 320 treatment group students and 183 control group students.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent and student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

The positive impacts on parent general perceptions of school safety were evident for all eight subgroups two years later. Parents rated school safety as higher regardless of subgroup (attended a SINI or non-SINI school, in elementary or secondary school, had reading or mathematics performance below or above the median at the time of OSP application) (appendix table A-11). Of the eight subgroup impacts on student general perceptions of school safety, three were statistically significant—students attending SINI schools, students in secondary grades, and students who were below the median in mathematics at the time of application (appendix table A-12).

Impacts on Parent Involvement in Education

The legislation calls for the study to look at the impacts of the program on parent involvement in education. As noted in the evaluation's previous report, some studies have linked parent involvement to better academic achievement and fewer behavioral problems for students (Jeynes 2005; El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal 2010).

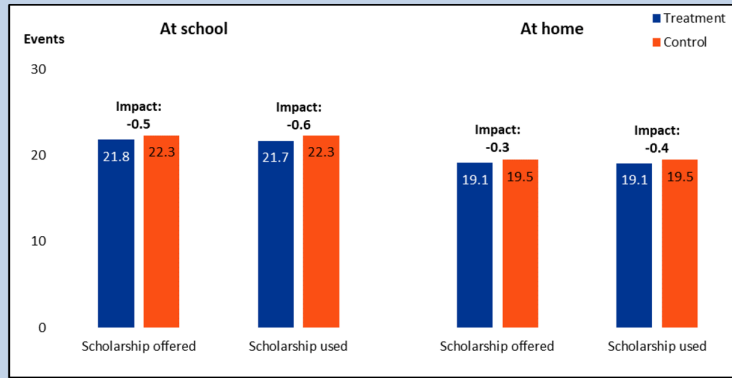
Parents responded to two sets of survey items that measured involvement with education at school and in the home. The first was a set of eight items for which parents indicated how often during the school year they interacted with the school in various ways, such as receiving report cards, receiving information from the school, communicating with teachers, attending conferences with teachers, attending school activities or meetings, and volunteering at the school or on class trips.³⁷ The second included four survey items that asked parents about the frequency of various education-related activities with their child at home during the past month: helping with homework, helping with reading and mathematics that was not part of homework, talking about experiences in school, and working on a school project.³⁸

The program had no impact on the study's measures of parent involvement in education at school and in the home two years after applying to the program. The number of school involvement events was 21.8 for the treatment group and 22.3 for the control group, and the difference was not statistically significant (figure 19). The number of education-related events at home was 19.1 for the treatment group and 19.5 for the control group, and the difference was not statistically significant. Scholarship use had no impact on parent involvement in education, and there were no impacts on parent involvement in any of the eight subgroups. Appendix tables A-13 and A-14 present the full set of subgroup impacts for parent involvement.

³⁷ The survey asked parents to choose from the following categories: never, once, 2 or 3 times, or 4 or more times.

³⁸ The survey asked parents to choose from the following categories: never, once, 2 or 3 times, 4 or 5 times, or 6 or more times.

Figure 19. Impacts on parent involvement in education at school and at home (number of events reported) for scholarship offer and use, in second year



NOTE: Sample size for school involvement is 540 treatment group parents and 349 control group parents. Sample size for home involvement is 564 treatment group parents and 375 control group parents.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Appendix A. Lottery Structure, Study Sample, and Impact Findings

A-1. Lottery Structure

The Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) statute specifies a higher probability of award for applicants in three priority groups: (1) siblings of students already participating in the program, (2) students attending a low-performing school in need of improvement (SINI) at the time of application, and (3) students previously offered a scholarship who did not use it. The relative probabilities for each group were determined as follows by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) officials who oversaw the program:

- Twenty-five percent higher probability for SINI and previous awardees who never used a scholarship, and
- Forty percent higher probability for applicants with a sibling already in the OSP.

The probabilities are stated in percentage terms rather than absolute terms and are applied relative to the probability for the “no priority” group. Because the number of eligible applicants in each group differed each year of the lottery, the absolute or actual award probability for each priority group also differed somewhat but the relative priorities stayed the same across years (table A-1).

Table A-1. Scholarship offers by priority group categories, by application year and treatment status

	Total	No priority	Sibling already in program	Attended SINI school or previous awardee never used
2012				
Treatment	316	46	47	223
Control	220	49	23	148
Award probability	59%	48%	67%	60%
2013				
Treatment	394	87	62	245
Control	324	103	36	185
Award probability	55%	46%	64%	57%
2014				
Treatment	285	84	44	157
Control	232	95	24	113
Award probability	55%	47%	65%	58%

NOTE: Students in more than one category (i.e., a sibling already in the program *and* enrolled in SINI school) were given the probability for the higher of the two categories.

SOURCE: OSP applications and records from OSP program operator.

A-2. Characteristics of the Study Sample

Table A-2. Characteristics of treatment and control groups at time of application (full sample)

	Treatment			Control			Difference
	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	
Year of application							
First cohort (spring 2012)	995	30.0%	45.8	776	30.0%	45.8	0.0
Second cohort (spring 2013)	995	41.0	49.0	776	41.0	49.0	0.0
Third cohort (spring 2014)	995	29.0	45.0	776	29.0	45.0	0.0
Entering grade							
Kindergarten	995	23.0%	42.1	776	27.0%	44.4	4.0
Grade 1	995	12.0	32.0	776	10.0	31.0	-2.0
Grade 2	995	9.0	29.0	776	10.0	30.0	1.0
Grade 3	995	10.0	30.0	776	8.0	28.0	-2.0
Grade 4	995	8.0	27.0	776	8.0	28.0	0.0
Grade 5	995	6.0	24.0	776	5.0	23.0	-1.0
Grade 6	995	9.0	29.0	776	7.0	26.0	-2.0
Grade 7	995	6.0	24.0	776	6.0	23.0	0.0
Grade 8	995	4.0	20.0	776	5.0	22.0	1.0
Grade 9	995	6.0	23.0	776	8.0	27.0	2.0
Grade 10	995	4.0	18.0	776	4.0	19.0	0.0
Grade 11 or 12 ¹	995	3.0	16.0	776	3.0	16.0	0.0
Baseline academic performance							
Reading scale score at time of application	968	561.0	91.3	747	562.5	94.7	-1.5
Mathematics scale score at time of application	951	534.8	113.5	726	540.8	113.2	-6.0
Student demographics							
Student is female	995	49.0%	50.0	776	49.0%	50.0	0.0
Student is African American	995	84.0%	36.0	776	87.0%	34.0	-3.0
Student has disabilities or other challenges	995	15.0%	35.0	776	13.0%	33.0	2.0
Student attends a school in need of improvement	995	64.0%	48.0	776	63.0%	48.0	2.0
Student age difference from median age of grade	995	<0.1	0.5	776	<0.1	0.5	<0.1
Family characteristics							
Parent went to college	991	60.0%	49.0	768	59.0%	49.0	1.0
Parent gave school grade of A or B at time of application	870	59.0%	49.0	691	57.0%	50.0	2.0
Parent perception of school safety at time of application	890	74.0%	44.0	703	70.0%	46.0	4.0
Parent is employed at time of application	991	48.0%	50.0	769	47.0%	50.0	1.0
Family income in thousands at time of application	995	12.6	13.4	776	13.0	13.5	-0.4
Number of children in household at time of application	984	2.6	1.4	769	2.6	1.4	-0.1
Months at current address at time of application (in tens)	981	6.9	8.5	767	6.2	7.3	0.8*

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

¹The percentages for grades 11 and 12 are combined due to small sample sizes.

NOTE: For binary variables (e.g., grade level or female), the mean is the proportion of positive responses, and the standard deviation measures how spread out the distribution is from that proportion.

SOURCE: OSP applications and *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered at the time of application.

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Table A-3. Sample size, valid sample, and percentage missing data at second-year followup

	Treatment			Control		
	Sample size	Non-missing sample size	Percent missing	Sample size	Non-missing sample size	Percent missing
Outcomes						
Reading score	988	760	23	774	495	36
Mathematics score	988	757	23	774	493	36
Student reported satisfaction	554	368	34	407	208	49
Student reported safety	554	356	36	407	205	50
Parent overall satisfaction with child's school	988	702	29	774	476	39
Parent reported safety of school	988	697	29	774	464	40
Frequency of parent educational activities	988	691	30	774	464	40
Frequency of parent communications with school	988	665	33	774	431	44
Covariates						
Gender	988	988	0	774	774	0
Race	988	988	0	774	774	0
Reading score at time of application	988	961	3	774	745	4
Mathematics score at time of application	988	944	4	774	724	6
Attending a school in need of improvement	988	988	0	774	774	0
Whether student has a learning disability	988	988	0	774	774	0
Whether student has an individual education program (IEP)	988	988	0	774	774	0
Parent's education	988	984	<1	774	766	1
Parent's employment status	988	984	<1	774	767	1
Household income	988	988	0	774	774	0
Number of children in household	988	977	1	774	767	1
Number of months at current address	988	975	1	774	765	1
Parent satisfaction with school	988	863	13	774	689	11
Parent satisfaction with school safety	988	884	11	774	701	9
Days from September 1 to followup test	988	760	23	774	496	36

SOURCE: OSP applications, *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests, parent and student surveys for OSP evaluation.

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Table A-4. Characteristics of treatment and control groups at time of application, for students who completed reading tests at second-year followup

	Treatment			Control			Difference of means
	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	
Year of application							
First cohort (spring 2012)	612	27.8%	44.8%	389	27.9%	44.9%	-0.1
Second cohort (spring 2013)	612	42.9	49.5	389	43.3	45.5	-0.4
Third cohort (spring 2014)	612	29.2	45.5	389	28.8	45.3	0.5
Entering grade							
Kindergarten	612	17.5%	38.0%	389	19.9%	39.9%	-2.4
Grade 1	612	11.6	32.0	389	11.2	31.6	0.4
Grade 2	612	9.3	29.1	389	10.0	30.0	-0.7
Grade 3	612	11.5	31.9	389	8.9	28.5	2.6
Grade 4	612	9.0	28.6	389	9.2	29.0	-0.3
Grade 5	612	6.6	24.8	389	5.0	21.8	1.5
Grade 6	612	11.4	31.8	389	8.4	27.8	3.0
Grade 7	612	7.1	25.8	389	6.9	25.4	0.2
Grade 8	612	4.5	20.7	389	7.6	26.6	-3.1*
Grade 9	612	6.7	25.1	389	7.1	25.7	-0.4
Grade 10	612	2.9	16.6	389	4.1	19.9	-1.3
Grade 11	612	1.8	13.4	389	1.4	11.6	0.4
Test score							
Reading scale score at time of application	612	574.7	82.8	389	571.6	89.0	3.2
Mathematics scale score at time of application	612	545.6	108.2	389	548.7	109.0	-3.1
Student characteristics							
Student is female	612	52.0%	50.0%	389	50.1%	50.0%	1.9
Student is African American	612	85.5%	35.2%	389	87.3%	33.3%	-1.8
Student has disabilities or other challenges	612	14.6%	35.3%	389	9.7%	29.6%	4.9*
Student attends a school in need of improvement	612	71.4%	45.2%	389	69.4%	46.1%	2.0
Student age difference from median age of grade	612	<0.1	0.4	389	<-0.1	0.5	0.1
Family characteristics							
Parent went to college	612	59.1%	49.2%	389	60.3%	48.9%	-1.2
Parent gave school grade of A or B at time of application	612	58.5%	49.3%	389	57.6%	49.4%	1.0
Parent perception of school safety at time of application	612	73.8%	44.0%	389	67.2%	47.0%	6.7*
Parent is employed at time of application	612	47.7%	49.9%	389	48.1%	50.0%	-0.4
Family income in thousands at time of application	612	12.2	12.8	389	13.3	13.6	-0.1
Number of children in household at time of application	612	2.5	1.4	389	2.7	1.4	-0.2*
Months at current address at time of application (in tens)	612	7.0	8.8	389	6.4	7.7	0.6

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: This table shows baseline characteristics for the 612 students in the treatment group, and 389 students in the control group who completed the reading achievement test in the second year of followup. Five students completed the reading but not the mathematics achievement test, so the analysis sample for mathematics outcomes is very similar. For binary variables (e.g., grade level or female), the mean is the proportion of positive responses, and the standard deviation measures how spread out the distribution is from that proportion.

SOURCE: OSP applications and *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered at time of application.

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Table A-5. Characteristics of treatment and control groups at time of application, for parents who completed surveys at second-year followup

	Treatment			Control			Difference of means
	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	
Year of application							
First cohort (spring 2012)	569	29.0%	45.4%	382	28.0%	44.9%	1.1
Second cohort (spring 2013)	569	42.9	49.5	382	42.4	49.4	0.5
Third cohort (spring 2014)	569	28.0	44.9	382	29.6	45.6	-1.6
Entering grade							
Kindergarten	569	16.8%	37.4%	382	20.3%	40.3%	-3.5
Grade 1	569	11.7	31.7	382	13.1	33.8	-1.4
Grade 2	569	9.9	29.9	382	10.0	30.0	-0.1
Grade 3	569	12.3	32.8	382	9.7	29.6	2.6
Grade 4	569	8.5	27.9	382	7.9	27.0	0.6
Grade 5	569	7.2	25.8	382	4.8	21.4	2.4
Grade 6	569	9.9	29.9	382	7.8	26.8	2.1
Grade 7	569	7.0	25.4	382	6.0	23.7	1.0
Grade 8	569	4.2	20.0	382	6.8	25.2	-2.6
Grade 9	569	6.8	25.2	382	6.8	25.2	0.0
Grade 10	569	2.8	16.6	382	4.4	20.5	-1.6
Grade 11	569	2.8	16.6	382	2.2	14.7	0.6
Test score							
Reading scale score at time of application	569	573.2	85.8	382	568.2	90.7	5.0
Mathematics scale score at time of application	569	548.4	109.7	382	543.9	111.1	4.5
Student characteristics							
Student is female	569	49.3%	50.0%	382	48.8%	50.0%	0.5
Student is African American	569	85.6%	35.1%	382	85.4%	35.3%	0.2
Student has disabilities or other challenges	569	16.1%	36.7%	382	12.4%	32.9%	3.7
Student attends a school in need of improvement	569	70.6%	45.6%	382	66.3%	47.3%	4.3
Student age difference from median age of grade	569	<0.1	0.5	382	<0.1	0.5	<0.1
Family characteristics							
Parent went to college	569	61.5%	48.7%	382	59.9%	49.0%	1.6
Parent gave school grade of A or B at time of application	569	58.9%	49.2%	382	56.0%	49.6%	2.9
Parent perception of school safety at time of application	569	76.0%	42.7%	382	70.5%	45.6%	5.6
Parent is employed at time of application	569	48.4%	50.0%	382	46.9%	49.9%	1.5
Family income in thousands at time of application	569	11.9	12.4	382	13.1	13.0	-1.2
Number of children in household at time of application	569	2.5	1.4	382	2.7	1.4	-0.2*
Months at current address at time of application (in tens)	569	7.4	9.3	382	6.4	7.8	1.0

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: This table shows baseline characteristics for the 569 students in the treatment group and the 382 students in the control group who completed the parent survey in the second year of followup. For binary variables (e.g., grade level or female), the mean is the proportion of positive responses, and the standard deviation measures how spread out the distribution is from that proportion.

SOURCE: OSP applications and *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered at time of application.

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Table A-6. Characteristics of treatment and control groups at time of application, for students who completed surveys at second-year followup

	Treatment			Control			Difference of means
	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	
Year of application							
First cohort (spring 2012)	331	31.6%	46.5%	186	29.8%	45.7%	1.7
Second cohort (spring 2013)	331	42.0	49.4	186	42.4	49.4	-0.4
Third cohort (spring 2014)	331	26.4	44.1	186	27.7	44.8	-1.3
Entering grade							
Grade 3	331	19.1%	39.3%	186	19.3%	39.5%	-0.2
Grade 4	331	14.4	35.2	186	20.9	40.7	-6.4
Grade 5	331	10.1	30.1	186	6.2	24.2	3.9
Grade 6	331	19.5	39.6	186	10.1	30.1	9.4*
Grade 7	331	8.8	28.3	186	6.7	25.1	2.0
Grade 8	331	8.0	27.2	186	11.6	32.1	-3.6
Grade 9	331	11.1	31.5	186	14.6	35.3	-3.5
Grade 10	331	5.6	23.1	186	7.4	26.2	-1.8
Grade 11	331	3.3	17.8	186	3.1	17.3	0.2
Test score							
Reading scale score at time of application	331	627.1	49.5	186	627.5	52.9	-0.4
Mathematics scale score at time of application	331	612.2	72.7	186	619.7	66.7	-7.5
Student characteristics							
Student is female	331	51.9%	50.0%	186	47.5%	49.9%	4.4
Student is African American	331	84.0%	36.6%	186	84.4%	36.3%	-0.3
Student has disabilities or other challenges	331	14.7%	35.4%	186	14.9%	35.7%	-0.2
Student attends a school in need of improvement	331	87.1%	33.5%	186	88.3%	32.2%	-1.2
Student age difference from median age of grade	331	<0.1	0.5	186	<-0.1	0.5	0.1
Family characteristics							
Parent went to college	331	53.2%	49.9%	186	62.9%	48.3%	-9.8*
Parent gave school grade of A or B at time of application	331	54.6%	49.8%	186	50.9%	50.0%	3.7
Parent perception of school safety at time of application	331	75.1%	43.2%	186	64.6%	47.8%	10.5*
Parent is employed at time of application	331	47.6%	49.9%	186	47.6%	49.9%	<0.1
Family income in thousands at time of application	331	12.7	12.9	186	12.9	13.6	-0.2
Number of children in household at time of application	331	2.6	1.4	186	2.8	1.4	-0.3*
Months at current address at time of application (in tens)	331	7.2	9.1	186	6.5	7.3	0.8

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: This table shows baseline characteristics for the 331 students in the treatment group and 186 students in the control group who completed the student survey in the second year of followup. For binary variables (e.g., grade level or female), the mean is the proportion of positive responses, and the standard deviation measures how spread out the distribution is from that proportion.

SOURCE: OSP applications and *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered at time of application.

A-3. Impact Findings by Outcome and Student Subgroups

Table A-7. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on reading test scores after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			p-value of estimates
	Treatment group mean scale score	Control group mean scale score	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	
Full sample	620.74	624.07	-3.33	-0.06	-4.25	-0.07	0.18
Subgroups							
SINI	635.77	637.88	-2.11	-0.04	-2.71	-0.05	0.48
Not SINI	587.15	593.32	-6.17	-0.11	-7.70	-0.14	0.18
Difference			4.06				0.46
Elementary students	600.21	606.14	-5.93*	-0.12	-7.28	-0.14	0.04
Middle/high school students	664.40	662.68	1.72	0.03	2.37	0.05	0.72
Difference			-7.65				0.18
Reading performance below median	605.22	609.33	-4.11	-0.07	-5.22	-0.09	0.28
Reading performance above median	634.18	636.64	-2.46	-0.04	-3.14	-0.06	0.47
Difference			-1.65				0.75
Mathematics performance below median	606.35	611.34	-4.99	-0.09	-6.38	-0.11	0.20
Mathematics performance above median	633.83	635.64	-1.81	-0.03	-2.30	-0.04	0.60
Difference			-3.19				0.55

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered two years after application.

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Table A-8. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on mathematics test scores after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			p-value of estimates
	Treatment group mean scale score	Control group mean scale score	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	
Full sample	597.90	607.82	-9.92*	-0.13	-12.62	-0.17	<0.01
Subgroups							
SINI	616.94	625.82	-8.88*	-0.13	-11.39	-0.17	0.03
Not SINI	556.78	569.11	-12.33*	-0.17	-15.32	-0.22	0.02
Difference			3.45				0.60
Elementary students	569.14	582.18	-13.04*	-0.21	-16.02	-0.26	<0.01
Middle/high school students	661.66	665.58	-3.92	-0.06	-5.36	-0.08	0.54
Difference			-9.12				0.21
Reading performance below median	579.30	587.44	-8.14	-0.11	-10.31	-0.14	0.12
Reading performance above median	614.56	626.10	-11.54*	-0.16	-14.72	-0.20	0.01
Difference			3.40				0.61
Mathematics performance below median	573.47	586.21	-12.74*	-0.17	-16.22	-0.22	0.02
Mathematics performance above median	621.16	628.92	-7.76*	-0.11	-9.86	-0.14	0.05†
Difference			-4.98				0.45

†Actual value is less than 0.05.

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered two years after application.

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Table A-9. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on parent general satisfaction after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			p-value of estimates
	Treatment group mean percentage	Control group mean percentage	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	
Full sample	79.1	75.0	4.1	0.09	5.0	0.11	0.16
Subgroups							
SINI	77.8	73.2	4.6	0.10	5.6	0.13	0.21
Not SINI	80.8	77.8	3.0	0.07	3.6	0.09	0.52
Difference			1.6				0.79
Elementary students	80.9	78.0	2.9	0.07	3.4	0.08	0.41
Middle/high school students	74.5	67.9	6.5	0.14	8.5	0.18	0.18
Difference			-3.7				0.52
Reading performance below median	74.0	73.9	0.1	<0.01	0.1	<0.01	0.99
Reading performance above median	82.3	74.6	7.7*	0.18	9.5	0.22	0.05
Difference			-7.6				0.18
Mathematics performance below median	72.4	74.4	-2.1	-0.05	-2.5	-0.06	0.63
Mathematics performance above median	84.7	74.8	9.8*	0.23	12.0	0.28	0.01
Difference			-11.9*				0.03

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Impacts Two Years After Students Applied

Table A-10. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on student general satisfaction after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)				Impact of scholarship use (TOT)		
	Treatment group mean percentage	Control group mean percentage	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	p-value of estimates
Full sample	65.4	64.5	0.9	0.02	1.2	0.02	0.85
Subgroups							
SINI	63.7	63.9	-0.3	-0.01	-0.4	-0.01	0.95
Not SINI	79.6	70.8	8.8	0.18	12.3	0.26	0.49
Difference			-9.1				0.50
Elementary students	74.1	74.4	-0.3	-0.01	-0.4	-0.01	0.96
Middle/high school students	57.7	55.8	1.9	0.04	2.6	0.05	0.78
Difference			-2.2				0.80
Reading performance below median	66.5	62.6	3.9	0.08	5.1	0.10	0.55
Reading performance above median	66.2	68.4	-2.2	-0.05	-2.8	-0.06	0.73
Difference			6.1				0.50
Mathematics performance below median	60.6	61.2	-0.6	-0.01	-0.8	-0.02	0.93
Mathematics performance above median	72.0	69.9	2.1	0.05	2.8	0.06	0.73
Difference			-2.7				0.75

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Impacts Two Years After Students Applied

Table A-11. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on parent general perceptions that school is very safe after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			
	Treatment group mean percentage	Control group mean percentage	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	p-value of estimates
Full sample	70.7	54.7	16.0*	0.32	19.5*	0.39	<0.01
Subgroups							
SINI	69.1	51.1	18.0*	0.36	22.0*	0.44	<0.01
Not SINI	73.0	61.5	11.6*	0.24	14.1*	0.29	0.04
Difference			6.4				0.35
Elementary students	75.1	60.5	14.6*	0.30	17.4*	0.36	<0.01
Middle/high school students	62.7	44.0	18.7*	0.38	24.3*	0.49	<0.01
Difference			-4.1				0.57
Reading performance below median	70.9	54.0	16.9*	0.34	20.5*	0.41	<0.01
Reading performance above median	69.6	55.0	14.6*	0.29	18.0*	0.36	<0.01
Difference			2.3				0.73
Mathematics performance below median	69.9	50.8	19.1*	0.38	23.5*	0.47	<0.01
Mathematics performance above median	71.4	58.3	13.2*	0.27	16.0*	0.32	<0.01
Difference			5.9				0.36

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Table A-12. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on student general perceptions that school is very safe after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			p-value of estimates
	Treatment group mean percentage	Control group mean percentage	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	
Full sample	55.3	43.7	11.6*	0.23	15.5*	0.31	0.01
Subgroups							
SINI	56.4	43.7	12.7*	0.26	16.8*	0.34	0.01
Not SINI	45.3	41.4	3.9	0.08	5.5	0.11	0.76
Difference			8.8				0.53
Elementary students	56.7	50.9	5.8	0.12	7.5	0.15	0.40
Middle/high school students	52.3	35.9	16.3*	0.34	22.6*	0.47	0.01
Difference			-10.5				0.26
Reading performance below median	51.6	40.5	11.1	0.23	15.1	0.31	0.08
Reading performance above median	59.6	47.7	11.9	0.24	15.6	0.31	0.07
Difference			-0.8				0.93
Mathematics performance below median	53.0	34.7	18.3*	0.39	24.9*	0.53	0.01
Mathematics performance above median	56.5	51.0	5.5	0.11	7.2	0.15	0.39
Difference			12.8				0.17

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Table A-13. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on parent involvement in school after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			
	Treatment group mean percentage	Control group mean percentage	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	p-value of estimates
Full sample	21.8	22.3	-0.5	-0.05	-0.6	-0.06	0.45
Subgroups							
SINI	21.2	21.3	-0.1	-0.01	-0.1	-0.02	0.88
Not SINI	23.1	24.3	-1.2	-0.13	-1.5	-0.16	0.22
Difference			1.1				0.39
Elementary students	22.5	23.9	-1.4	-0.14	-1.7	-0.17	0.07
Middle/high school students	20.3	19.0	1.3	0.15	1.7	0.20	0.21
Difference			-2.7*				0.04
Reading performance below median	21.3	22.2	-0.9	-0.09	-1.1	-0.10	0.31
Reading performance above median	22.3	22.4	-0.2	-0.02	-0.2	-0.02	0.85
Difference			-0.7				0.55
Mathematics performance below median	21.2	21.8	-0.6	-0.06	-0.7	-0.07	0.51
Mathematics performance above median	22.4	22.7	-0.4	-0.04	-0.4	-0.05	0.70
Difference			-0.2				0.87

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Table A-14. Impact estimates of the offer and use of a scholarship on parent involvement at home after two years

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)			Impact of scholarship use (TOT)			p-value of estimates
	Treatment group mean percentage	Control group mean percentage	Difference (estimated impact)	Effect size	Adjusted impact estimate	Effect size	
Full sample	19.1	19.5	-0.3	-0.04	-0.4	-0.05	0.46
Subgroups							
SINI	18.2	18.5	-0.3	-0.04	-0.3	-0.04	0.63
Not SINI	20.8	21.3	-0.5	-0.07	-0.6	-0.08	0.55
Difference			0.2				0.84
Elementary students	21.1	21.4	-0.4	-0.06	-0.4	-0.07	0.50
Middle/high school students	15.3	15.6	-0.3	-0.04	-0.4	-0.05	0.74
Difference			0.1				0.96
Reading performance below median	19.2	19.7	-0.4	-0.06	-0.5	-0.07	0.51
Reading performance above median	19.0	19.3	-0.2	-0.03	-0.3	-0.04	0.75
Difference			-0.2				0.82
Mathematics performance below median	19.3	20.0	-0.7	-0.10	-0.9	-0.12	0.32
Mathematics performance above median	19.1	19.1	<0.1	<0.01	<0.1	<0.01	0.99
Difference			-0.7				0.50

NOTE: ITT refers to the intent-to-treat impact estimates. TOT refers to the treatment-on-treated impact estimates.

SOURCE: Estimated means and impacts were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

Appendix B. Technical Approach

This appendix provides more detail about aspects of the evaluation that follow from its experimental design, including the study's ability to measure impacts that may be present (statistical power), and the statistical approach to measuring impacts. In addition, it provides technical details about the calculation of percentile changes, outcome measures and data collection procedures, and the construction of sampling and nonresponse weights.

B-1. Measuring the Impact of a Scholarship Offer and Its Use

During the period of the evaluation, students applied to receive a scholarship through the OSP. A lottery was conducted in the spring of each year, and students who received a scholarship offer then decided whether to use it. Students could be entering any grade level K–12. The scholarship could be used only in private schools that agreed to accept them, which is more than half of private schools in the District of Columbia (DC) (see Feldman et al. 2015).

The lottery creates an experiment, a powerful tool for measuring whether the OSP program caused student outcomes to change. Impacts of a scholarship offer are straightforward to measure because the lottery creates two groups that are statistically similar except for the offer of a scholarship—a treatment and a control group. Their outcomes can be compared with measure impacts of the scholarship offer. However, students in the treatment group who *use* their scholarship do not have direct counterparts in the control group—the study does not know which students in the control group would have used their scholarship if it had been offered to them. To measure impacts of use requires the study to adjust impacts measured for the full sample. The adjustment procedure is described below.

An implication of the single-lottery structure is that students choose a school *after* the lottery. The study cannot know which schools students in the control group would have chosen had they been offered a scholarship. Researchers have not created ways to adjust impacts that would allow the study to estimate relationships between school characteristics and overall impacts, as they have with the relationship between the offer of a scholarship and its use. As a result, while overall impacts of the OSP are measured rigorously, sources of impacts cannot be measured at that level of rigor.

B-2. Detecting Impacts

The term *power* refers to a study's ability to detect impacts, which means to find that impacts are statistically significant when they in fact arise. Finding that an impact is statistically significant when it does not arise also is possible and is controlled in statistical tests by setting a Type I error rate in statistical tests.

A study's power is related to its sample size and statistical properties of outcomes being measured. For the same outcome, studies with larger sample sizes are more powerful—they can detect smaller impacts on that outcome. Power is calculated with standard formulas and commonly represented as a *minimum detectable effect size*, which is the effect that will be statistically significant with a probability conventionally set to 80 percent.

For the reading test, the study obtained responses from 612 treatment group students and 389 control group students. This yields a minimum detectable effect size of 0.13, which translates into a difference between the treatment and control groups of 5 percentile points (table B-1). For parent-reported school safety, the study obtained responses from 566 treatment group parents and 370 control group parents, which yields a minimum detectable effect size of 0.17 that translates into a difference of 8.5 percentage points. For student-reported school safety, the study obtained responses from 320 students in the treatment group and 183 students in the control group—this sample includes only students in grade 4 or higher. The minimum detectable effect size is 0.23, equivalent to an increase of 11.5 percentage points.

Table B-1 also shows detectable effects for two outcomes and three subgroups. (Detectable effects for mathematics subgroups will be nearly the same as for reading subgroups and are not shown here.) The table shows that within subgroups, detectable effect sizes range from 0.16 to 0.30. For test scores, the effect sizes are equivalent to students moving 6 to 10 percentile points (for example, from the 50th percentile to the 56th or 44th percentile). For percentage of parents giving a school a grade of A or B, it means the treatment group average needs to be 8 to 13 percentage points different from the control group average.

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Table B-1. Minimum detectable effect sizes

Outcome	Treatment group sample size at followup	Control group sample size at followup	Minimum detectable effect size	Impact in units of the outcome
Reading score	612	389	0.13	5 percentile points
Student-reported school safety	320	183	0.23	11.5 percentage points
Parent-reported school safety	566	370	0.17	8.5 percentage points
Percent of parents giving school a grade of A or B	569	382	0.17	8.5 percentage points
Parent involvement with schools	540	349	0.17	2 events
Reading score				
Subgroup				
SINI	446	244	0.16	6 percentile points
Not SINI	166	145	0.23	9 percentile points
Student is below median in reading	300	186	0.19	8 percentile points
Student is above median in reading	312	203	0.18	7 percentile points
Elementary students	409	271	0.16	7 percentile points
Middle/high school students	203	118	0.24	10 percentile points
Percent of parents giving school a grade of A or B				
Subgroup				
SINI	415	235	0.20	8 percentage points
Not SINI	154	147	0.30	13 percentage points
Student is below median in reading	287	178	0.24	10 percentage points
Student is above median in reading	282	204	0.23	10 percentage points
Elementary students	371	253	0.20	9 percentage points
Middle/high school students	198	129	0.29	12 percentage points

SOURCE: OSP applications, *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests, parent and student surveys for OSP evaluation, and author's calculation.

B-3. Estimating Impacts

Because eligible applicants to the OSP are randomly assigned by the lottery, on average, the treatment and control groups of students should be identical at the time of the lottery, which allows the study to attribute differences in average outcomes to receiving a scholarship offer. In practice, small differences in characteristics such as academic achievement and demographic background can arise. Also, reducing variances of outcomes yields more statistical power, as noted above. For these reasons, conventional practice is to use linear regression models to estimate impacts.

The structure of regression models used here is shown in equation (1):

$$(1) \quad S_{it} = \alpha + \beta T_i + X_{i0}\Gamma + \delta READ_{i0} + \eta MATH_{i0} + \theta Days_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

S_{it} is the test score for student i in year t . The time of application is 0, the baseline, and two years later is $t = 2$, which is when the outcomes are measured for this report. T_i is a (0,1) indicator indicating whether the student is in the treatment group (received a scholarship offer). It is fixed by the lottery, so it does not have a time dimension. The key coefficient in this model is β , which measures the impact of receiving a scholarship offer on the outcome of interest. X_{i0} is a set of student characteristics measured at time 0, and $READ_{i0}$ and $MATH_{i0}$ are reading and mathematics scores measured at time 0. Students were tested in their home schools, and timing of these tests varied between students, which is accounted for in the regression by including a variable $Days_{it}$ that measures the number of days between September 1 and the date when the test was taken.

The model included the following covariates:

- Indicator for year of application (spring 2012, 2013, or 2014)
- Indicator for grade level the child was entering the next school year
- *TerraNova* test scores in reading and mathematics at the time of application
- Number of days from September 1 to date of followup test
- Indicator for whether student was enrolled in a SINI school at time of application
- Student demographic characteristics (gender, race, disability, age difference from median age for grade)
- Family characteristics (employment, college education, income, number of children, months at current address)
- Parent's rating of safety and satisfaction with child's school at time of application³⁹

A classical regression model assumes random errors between any two participants are uncorrelated. However, some students in the OSP sample are in the same families, and it is unlikely their random errors are uncorrelated. The approach here is to estimate impacts using "generalized estimating

³⁹Even parents of pre-K students completed ratings of safety and satisfaction with their child's current school at time of application. These students may have been in traditional public school preschools, private schools, or very different settings, including home daycare.

equations” with families specified as a group variable (on generalized estimating equations, see Liang and Zeger [1986]). This approach is consistent with the clustering approach the first OSP study used (see Wolf et al. 2010) and was selected for the current study both to maintain comparability and because family level clustering is a more conservative analysis strategy than alternatives that were considered, such as clustering by school. The first impact report for the current study (Dynarski et al. 2017) compared effects that clustering had on estimated variances and found that allowing for family clustering in estimating impacts on reading and mathematics test scores resulted in variances being larger by 3.1 percent for reading and 2.8 percent for mathematics. Allowing for school clustering resulted in variances being 1.3 percent smaller for reading and 1.7 percent larger for mathematics.

An alternate approach to estimation involves using higher-order terms (e.g., a cubic function) in the models (see Chingos and Kuehn 2017). Using a polynomial model to estimate impacts for reading and mathematics found that neither of the higher-order terms was statistically significant, and impacts were similar to the primary model (table B-2).

Table B-2. Comparison of primary regression and polynomial model estimates of the impacts of offering a scholarship on reading and mathematics achievement in Year 2

Outcome	Primary model		Polynomial model		Difference of estimates
	Impact estimate	p-value	Impact estimate	p-value	
Reading achievement	-3.33	0.18	-2.90	0.24	0.43
Mathematics achievement	-9.92	0.003	-9.98	0.002	0.06

Estimating Subgroup Impacts

For subgroup analyses, equation (1) above is modified to allow for an interaction between the indicator for students in the treatment group and an indicator for membership of a given subgroup. The model includes an interaction between the subgroup indicator and treatment, and the subgroup indicator is included as an additional explanatory variable. This ensures that the coefficient on the interaction is not picking up a direct relationship between the outcome variable and the subgroup indicator. The equation below assumes that the entire sample is divided into two groups, with G_i an indicator for whether student i belongs to the particular group.

$$(2) \quad S_{it} = \alpha + \beta T_i + \pi G_i + \rho G_i T_i + X_{i0} \Gamma + \delta READ_{i0} + \eta MATH_{i0} + \theta Days_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

In this equation, β measures the impact for the omitted subgroup (those not in group G), ρ captures the *difference* between the impact on the omitted group and group G , and the sum $\beta + \rho$ captures the estimate of the total impact of treatment for group G . For outcomes other than test scores, the same modification is made to equation (2) to allow for the relationship between the given outcome and both group G and the interaction between G and treatment status.

Estimating Impacts of Using a Scholarship

The Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act specifies that the evaluation measure both the impact of being offered a scholarship and the impact of *using* a scholarship. This latter impact, sometimes called the impact of “treatment on the treated” (TOT), can be estimated in a straightforward way by dividing the impact of being offered a scholarship by the fraction of the treatment group that uses the scholarship (Bloom 1984). For example, if an impact of the offer were estimated to be 10 points, and half of the treatment group used their scholarship, the impact of using a scholarship would be estimated to be 20 points (10 divided by 50 percent). This adjustment relies on the assumption that students are not affected by the offer unless they use their scholarship. This assumption would be violated if the offer changed student or family behavior in some way that affected outcomes even if the scholarship were not used, which seems implausible in this context. Other approaches to estimating the impacts of using a scholarship have been developed, but in practice tend to yield similar estimates (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996). A comparison of TOT estimates using the Bloom adjustment with estimates from an instrumental variables (IV) approach was conducted for this study’s first impact report. The two methods produced very similar estimates (table B-3).

Table B-3. Comparison of Bloom adjustment and instrumental variables estimates of the impacts of using a scholarship (TOT estimates) on reading and mathematics achievement in Year 1

Outcome	Bloom adjustment		Instrumental variables		Difference of estimates
	TOT estimate	p-value	TOT estimate	p-value	
Reading achievement	-5.42	0.12	-5.48	0.13	0.06
Mathematics achievement	-8.92	0.03	-8.96	0.04	0.04

For this second year, there are four semesters in which students could have used their scholarship. An additional consideration is how to define “use”: it could be scholarship use in any of the four semesters, or scholarship use in all four semesters. The main text defines “use” to be any use in the four semesters. In Appendix C-2 we present estimates in which use is defined as using the scholarship for all four semesters.

B-4. Method for Calculating Percentile Changes

Scale scores from standardized tests are useful in regression models because of their statistical properties, but they can be difficult to interpret. Percentile changes are easier to interpret, but because of the study’s K–12 grade range, converting scale scores to percentile changes required additional considerations discussed here.⁴⁰ The considerations center on the fact that students in different grade

⁴⁰The study also considered using z-scores, which use scale scores at each grade level and adjust them to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. However, the *TerraNova* does not include national-norm information for entering kindergartners, a large component of the study’s sample. And z-scores do not have a direct interpretation, and ultimately would need to be converted to percentile differences to be interpretable.

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levels were in different places relative to the national distribution. Students in lower grade levels were higher in the distribution than students in higher grade levels.

The approach to compute percentile changes has three steps:

1. At each grade level, the average scale score for the control group was compared to the national *TerraNova* score distribution for that grade level. The average was converted to a percentile of the national distribution using a quantile function, in this case the inverse normal cumulative distribution function. Grades scoring above the national average have percentiles greater than 50, and grades scoring below the national average have percentiles less than 50.
2. At each grade level, the average scale score for the treatment group was computed as the average scale score for the control group plus the estimated treatment impact, which was assumed to be the same for each grade level. For example, the average reading score for first grade students in the control group was 571, which puts these students at the 64th percentile relative to the national sample. The average score for first grade students in the treatment group was 571 of the control group minus the impact of 3.33 points, which yielded a score of 568 and put these students at the 62nd percentile, relative to the national sample.⁴¹
3. Steps (1) and (2) yield 11 differences between percentiles of the treatment and control groups. These differences were averaged using the proportion of the sample at each grade level as weights.

This procedure yielded a negative percentile change if the impact on scores was negative, and vice versa. However, the same magnitude of the score impact has different effects on percentile changes depending on the grade level.

The same procedure was used for student subgroup results presented in this report.

Table B-4. Computing percentile changes, by grade level, reading

Grade	OSP control group mean scale score	<i>TerraNova</i> national mean scale score	<i>TerraNova</i> national standard deviation	OSP control group mean as percentile	OSP treatment group mean as percentile	Change of percentile
1	571	554	45	65	62	-3
2	590	599	42	42	39	-3
3	618	622	39	46	42	-3
4	625	637	39	38	35	-3
5	639	652	39	37	34	-3
6	654	658	41	46	43	-3
7	645	664	41	32	29	-3
8	655	674	40	32	29	-3
9	663	679	41	35	32	-3
10	682	688	43	44	41	-3
11	675	700	44	28	26	-2
12	655	708	44	12	10	-1

SOURCE: National mean and standard deviation from *TerraNova Third Edition Technical Report* (CTB/McGraw-Hill 2010). Estimated OSP means were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2.

⁴¹The model estimated an overall impact, which applies to all students in the sample, and that overall impact is used to calculate percentile changes. In theory, grade-level impacts could be used to calculate percentile changes, but these would be highly variable because of the small samples in each grade.

B-5. Outcome Measures and Data Collection Procedures

Student testing in reading and mathematics. The study selected the *TerraNova, Third Edition* assessment (CTB/McGraw-Hill 2008) because the abbreviated battery, which is available for grades 2–12, offered shorter test administration times for most students. Annual testing was conducted with students at the school they were attending in spring of the second year after applying to the program. The spring data collection window was designed to occur as close to two years after baseline testing as possible. The study worked with school staff members to schedule times and locations for the assessments that minimized disruption for students. Students in grades K–2 were tested in groups of 5 or fewer, while students in grades 3–12 were tested in groups of 10 or fewer. Limiting the time to administer the test was critical to ensuring school cooperation with the study’s data collection effort.

The study used trained staff to administer the *TerraNova* student assessments in reading and mathematics, using the full battery for grades K–1 and abbreviated batteries available for grades 2–12. Test administrators attended annual trainings before the start of each data collection period. A representative from the test publisher (CTB/McGraw-Hill) trained study staff on test administration procedures and standardized testing protocols. The staff followed the test publisher’s scripts and instructions during testing to ensure that testing conditions were similar across all schools in the study to minimize potential bias.

The *TerraNova, Third Edition* uses multiple-choice questions to measure subject area content and process skills. For grades K–2, the test focuses on the basic concepts of number, operations, measurement, geometry, patterns, and data representation. For grades 3–5, the test focuses on estimation, probability, simple functions, and inferences from data. For grades 6–12, the test covers more advanced applications of the basic concepts and data presentations, statistics, graphs, and problem solving situations. The reading test in grades K–2 includes oral (listening) comprehension, word analysis skills, phonics, and phonemic awareness. In the later primary and secondary grades, the focus is on reading comprehension using informational, narrative, expository text selections.

The *TerraNova*’s vertical scaling allows the OSP evaluation to analyze scores from students in different grade levels (i.e., K–12) in the same model. The test publisher administered test forms with common items to respondents in each pair of adjacent grade levels. The publisher used a procedure established by Stocking and Lord (1983) to equate scores from one grade to those of the adjacent grade, creating a vertical scale across grades.

Student surveys. Students in grades 4–12 completed a brief survey immediately after completing the assessment. The student survey provided outcome measures for student satisfaction and perceptions of safety. Other topics included attitude toward school, school environment, friends and classmates, and involvement in activities.

Parent surveys. Parent surveys provided self-reported outcome measures for parent satisfaction, perceptions of school safety, and parental involvement in education at school and in the home. A parent

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or guardian was asked to complete a brief survey for each child in their family who applied for an OSP scholarship. Each year, parents were contacted by mail and email to request that they complete the online survey. Parents were provided links and access codes for the web-based survey and paper copies were provided in followup mailings. The study also conducted followup calls to nonrespondents and offered the option to complete the survey with an interviewer by phone. Parents who completed the survey received a modest payment.

Tables B-5 through B-7 describe response rates for student tests, parent surveys, and student surveys. These respondents constitute the analysis samples for this report.

Table B-5. Student test response rates for second-year followup

	Original sample [*]	Reading respondents	Reading response rate (%)	Mathematics respondents	Mathematics response rate (%)
All students	1,762	1,255	71.2	1,250	70.9
Treatment group	988	760	76.9	757	76.6
Control group	774	495	64.0	493	63.7

* Of the original 1,771 students, 9 were entering 12th grade at the time of application and were no longer part of the study's data collection in the second year.

SOURCE: *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests.

Table B-6. Parent survey response rates for second-year followup

	Original sample	Respondents	Parent response rate (%)	Parent effective respondents	Effective response rate (%)
All students	1,762	1,186	67.3	1,304	74.0
Treatment group	988	707	71.6	743	75.2
Control group	774	479	61.9	562	72.6

SOURCE: Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

Table B-7. Student survey response rates for second-year followup

	Original sample [*]	Respondents	Student response rate (%)
All students	961	594	61.8
Treatment group	554	379	68.4
Control group	407	215	52.8

SOURCE: Student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

Other data sources. Application data and payment files documenting student's use of the scholarship was provided by the OSP program operator. Information about tuition rates for OSP participating private schools was obtained from the OSP school directories published by the program operator. Data on the public school characteristics that students in the study sample attended were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data. Data on the characteristics of private schools was obtained from the NCES Private School Survey.

B-6. Sampling and Nonresponse Weights

Weights were used in estimating impacts to offset the different probabilities that some applicants had in the lottery and to adjust for nonresponse. Weights had two parts: (1) a “base weight,” which is the inverse of the probability of being selected to treatment (or control), and (2) an adjustment for differential nonresponse.

Constructing Base Weights

The base weight is the inverse of the probability of being assigned to either the treatment or control group. For each randomization stratum s defined by cohort, SINI status, and sibling status, p is the probability of assignment to the treatment group (receiving an offer of a scholarship) and $1-p$ the probability of being assigned to the control group.

Adjustments for Nonresponse

The initial base weights were adjusted for nonresponse, where a “respondent” was of four types: (i) a student who had completed a *TerraNova* reading or mathematics test, (ii) a parent who had completed the questionnaire, (iii) a student who had completed the questionnaire, and (iv) a student whose principal had completed a questionnaire. The use of these weights helped control bias by compensating for different response rates across groups of students or parents. Essentially, nonresponse weights put more weight on students or parents that “look like” nonresponding students or parents.

The study needed to determine which baseline variables were correlated with the propensity to respond. Stepwise logistic regression was first used to select characteristics that predicted response (using a 20 percent level of significance entry cutoff). These stepwise procedures were done separately within each sampling stratum. Baseline variables included family income, parent or guardian’s job status, parent or guardian’s education, length of time at current address, disability status of the child, race, grade, gender, and baseline test score data (both reading and mathematics). The study then created nonresponse adjustment cells, and within cells used the Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detector (CHAID), approach. The CHAID program was used to identify cells with differing response rates within strata using the set of characteristics from the PROC LOGISTIC models. The nonresponse adjustment for each respondent in a cell was the reciprocal of the base-weighted response rate within the cell.

As a last step, the nonresponse-adjusted base weights were trimmed. Trimming prevents extremely large weights from inflating variances. The trimming rule was that weights larger than 4.5 times the median weight were set to equal 4.5 times the median weight. Medians were computed separately within the treatment and control groups.

Adjusting for Nonresponse Subsampling (parent survey weights)

The study used subsampling to increase the weighted parent response rates. By subsampling 50 percent of the initial control household nonrespondents⁴² then conducting intensive followup efforts with these households, the subsample allowed for a concentration of resources to improve the response outcome. A subsample of nonrespondents was drawn, and intensive efforts were made to get them to respond. Each initial subsampled nonrespondent who was converted to a respondent counted as one more respondent for purposes of the actual response rate, but counted as $1/(\text{sampling rate}_i)$ respondent for purposes of the effective response rate. The random sampling permitted respondents to “stand in” for members of the nonrespondent group who were not selected for the subsample but presumably would have converted to respondent status if they had been selected. In other words, the proportion of subsampled nonrespondents that converted represented themselves as well as the same proportion of nonsampled nonrespondents.

These “converted” cases were weighted by a factor of two (i.e., inverse of the subsampling rate or 0.5), to account for the complementary set of initial nonrespondents who were not randomly selected for targeted conversion efforts but who would have responded if they had been. The weights ensured that each converted member of the subsample represented him or herself as well as another study participant: a nonrespondent like him or her who would have converted had he/she been included in the subsample.

The final student-level weights for the parent survey analysis were equal to:

$$W_i = (1/p_i) * (NR_i) * (TR_i) * (X_i)$$

where p_i is the probability of selection to treatment or control for student i ; NR_i is the nonresponse adjustment (the reciprocal of the response rate) for the classification cell to which student i belongs; TR_i is the trimming adjustment (usually equal to 1, but in some cases equal to 4.5 times median cutoff divided by the untrimmed weight); and X_i is the factor for sampled nonrespondents, with X_i equal to 2.0 for this set and equal to 1 otherwise.

Tables B-8 through B-11 contain the full set of weights by study cohort and strata (priority).

⁴²These were households with at least one control child without a completed survey.

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Table B-8. Student reading tests

Priority/Cohort	Original sample		Respondents		Sum of base weight		Sum of final weight	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
No priority								
Spring 2012	46	48	39	31	40.3	30.1	33.8	33.1
Spring 2013	86	103	68	69	74.3	63.6	66.9	67.6
Spring 2014	84	95	67	68	71.4	64.1	63.7	63.7
Siblings								
Spring 2012	47	23	36	17	26.8	25.9	24.9	24.9
Spring 2013	61	36	49	27	38.7	36.8	34.3	34.9
Spring 2014	43	24	38	15	29.4	21.3	23.7	24.2
SINI/Never used previous award								
Spring 2012	222	147	168	85	139.7	106.5	131.5	131.2
Spring 2013	242	185	179	113	157.1	131.3	151.2	153.1
Spring 2014	157	113	116	70	99.7	83.6	96.1	96.1
Total	988	774	760	495	677.4	563.1	626.1	628.9

SOURCE: OSP applications, *TerraNova Third Edition* reading tests.

Table B-9. Student mathematics tests

Priority/Cohort	Original sample		Respondents		Sum of base weight		Sum of final weight	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
No priority								
Spring 2012	46	48	38	31	39.2	30.1	33.7	33.0
Spring 2013	86	103	67	69	73.2	63.6	66.6	67.4
Spring 2014	84	95	67	67	71.4	63.1	63.5	63.5
Siblings								
Spring 2012	47	23	36	17	26.8	25.9	24.8	24.8
Spring 2013	61	36	49	27	38.7	36.8	34.2	34.7
Spring 2014	43	24	38	14	29.4	19.8	23.6	24.1
SINI/Never used previous award								
Spring 2012	222	147	168	84	139.7	105.3	131.0	130.7
Spring 2013	242	185	179	114	157.1	132.5	150.6	152.5
Spring 2014	157	113	115	70	98.9	83.6	95.7	95.7
Total	988	774	757	493	674.4	560.7	623.6	626.4

SOURCE: OSP applications, *TerraNova Third Edition* mathematics tests.

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Table B-10. Parent survey

Priority/Cohort	Original sample		Respondents		Sum of base weight		Sum of final weight	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
No priority								
Spring 2012	46	48	40	35	41.3	33.9	32.6	31.3
Spring 2013	86	103	64	67	69.9	61.8	63.2	63.9
Spring 2014	84	95	59	56	62.9	52.8	62.0	60.2
Siblings								
Spring 2012	47	23	36	18	26.8	27.4	24.0	23.5
Spring 2013	61	36	44	22	34.8	29.9	32.4	33.0
Spring 2014	43	24	30	19	23.2	26.9	22.8	22.6
SINI/Never used previous award								
Spring 2012	222	147	175	100	145.6	125.3	121.2	124.0
Spring 2013	242	185	152	107	133.4	124.4	142.9	144.7
Spring 2014	157	113	107	55	92.0	65.7	90.8	90.8
Total	988	774	707	479	629.8	548.1	592.0	594.0

SOURCE: OSP applications and parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

Table B-11. Student survey

Priority/Cohort	Original sample		Respondents		Sum of base weight		Sum of final weight	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
No priority								
Spring 2012	14	13	13	4	13.4	3.9	9.0	7.8
Spring 2013	20	24	13	14	14.2	12.9	13.5	13.7
Spring 2014	22	22	16	14	17.0	13.2	14.5	12.8
Siblings								
Spring 2012	*	*	*	*	9.7	4.6	8.8	3.8
Spring 2013	*	*	*	*	11.1	9.5	8.8	8.4
Spring 2014	*	*	*	*	7.0	4.3	4.8	3.5
SINI/Never used previous award								
Spring 2012	157	100	82	36	68.2	45.1	80.9	77.7
Spring 2013	182	143	140	84	122.9	97.6	99.0	103.0
Spring 2014	112	87	79	50	67.9	59.7	59.7	64.4
Total	554	407	379	215	331.4	250.8	298.9	295.1

*For one or more cells, the sample size was suppressed to avoid a disclosure risk.

SOURCE: OSP applications and student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016

Longitudinal Weights

Weights also were constructed for students who had test scores in both year one and year two of the study. The same procedures were followed for the longitudinal weights as for the single year weights, with some minor adjustments. Base weights for the longitudinal weights were exactly the base weights already constructed. The response-status indicator for the longitudinal weight was whether a student responded in both years, which meant the number of responders was slightly lower for the longitudinal weights than for the number of responders in each year separately. Once longitudinal status was determined, the stepwise logistic model was run as before (for mathematics and reading separately) and

the CHAID was run as before (also for mathematics and reading separately). For the previous weights, if a nonresponse adjustment factor was larger than 3.0 it was flagged for investigation, with the possibility of collapsing the nonresponse cells before proceeding. For the longitudinal weights, the flag for investigation was set at 3.5 to acknowledge the smaller sample sizes in the various cells. The trimming factor was left as 4.5.

Appendix C. Additional Analyses

This appendix presents three kinds of additional analyses. The first looks at sensitivity of the findings to two issues related to the definition of schools in need of improvement for students who were in pre-K at the time of application, and the choice of a top code for parent involvement. The second presents estimates from models that compare impacts between the study's two followup years, and examines the extent to which parents choosing their child's school "mediates" the satisfaction they express about the school.

The third presents more details on parent satisfaction, parent involvement, and student safety. The main text presented parent general satisfaction as a summary grade for school, and involvement as a total count of activities. Individual survey items provide a way to look more closely at these outcomes. For example, parents may give their child's school a high grade, and looking at parent satisfaction items may indicate what aspects of schools are more satisfying to parents. The main text also presented student general perceptions of school safety as a summary response of whether students indicated the school was very safe, but a survey question about school incidents such as bullying and being threatened provided more detail about impacts of scholarships on aspects of the school environment as viewed by students.

C-1. Impacts on Test Scores in SINI and Non-SINI Schools, Excluding Pre-K Students

Students in grades K–12 are eligible for OSP scholarships, which means students can be attending pre-K programs at the time their parents apply for a scholarship. In fact, nearly a quarter of the study sample was attending pre-K. Because the legislation required that the lottery give priority to students from SINI schools, the program needed to categorize students as attending SINI schools or not, and pre-K students were all categorized as attending non-SINI schools even though some of them might be attending a public school that had been designated as SINI. Preschool programs do not fall within statutory definitions of SINI. One implication is that this categorization combines pre-K students with older students in grades K–12 who are attending higher-performing schools.

Results for test scores showed larger negative impacts for non-SINI students compared with SINI students. To assess if this result is related to the categorizing of all pre-K as non-SINI, test-score models were estimated with pre-K students excluded from the sample. Excluding pre-K students yielded larger negative impacts for non-SINI students (table C-1). Impacts for SINI students do not change much.

Table C-1. Comparing subgroup impacts with and without pre-K students in the sample

	Reading				Mathematics			
	SINI		Non-SINI		SINI		Non-SINI	
	Estimate	p-value	Estimate	p-value	Estimate	p-value	Estimate	p-value
Including pre-K	-0.17	0.96	-12.49	0.01	-1.97	0.59	-16.67	<0.01
Excluding pre-K	-0.10	0.97	-17.84	<0.01	-0.16	0.97	-23.49	<0.01

SOURCE: Estimates were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2.

C-2. Alternative Definitions of Scholarship Use

In the main text, the study defined scholarship “use” to be any use during the two years after applying for the scholarship. Students who used a scholarship in one or more of the four semesters were defined to be “users” for the purpose of calculating the impacts of scholarship use.

An alternative to this approach is to consider a user to be defined by full use, students who used their scholarship in all four semesters (Gerber and Green 2012). Essentially, this approach groups those not using a scholarship and those using it only partially, just as the approach in the main text groups those using a scholarship partially with those using it fully. Both approaches can be appropriate depending on what is assumed about impacts of partially using a scholarship. If partially using a scholarship is assumed to have about the same effects on outcomes as fully using a scholarship, the approach in the main text is appropriate. If partially using a scholarship is assumed to have no effects on outcomes, the alternative approach is appropriate.

Calculating the “treatment on treated” impacts using the alternative approach is straightforward. The treatment on treated impact is defined as the “intent to treat” impact divided by the fraction of users (the treated), however defined. In place of the fraction of “any users” in the main text, we can substitute the fraction of “all users.” By construction it is a smaller fraction, which means the treatment on treated impacts generally will be larger in absolute value. Applying this approach, positive intent to treat impacts become larger positive treatment on treated impacts, and negative intent to treat impacts become larger negative treatment on treated impacts.

The larger figures are evident for program impacts on reading and mathematics test scores (table C-2). For the full sample, the intent to treat impact for reading is -3.3 scale-score points, which is not statistically significant ($p = 0.18$). The treatment on treated impact for reading based on any use of the scholarship is -4.2 scale-score points. The treatment on treated impact based on full use of the scholarship is -5.6 scale score points. The “full use” estimate is 32 percent larger than the “any use” estimate, which is also the relationship between the percentage of students who were full users (59.2 percent) and the percent who were “any users” (78.4 percent). The proportion is different within subgroups because rates for students being full users or any users differ in each subgroup. For example, for middle and high school students, the rate of full use is 52.7 percent and the rate of any use is 72.4 percent—the full use estimate is 37 percent larger than the any use estimate.

Table C-2. Comparison of treatment impacts using two approaches for TOT

	Impact of scholarship offer (ITT)	Impact of scholarship use (TOT)		p-value of estimates
	Difference (estimated impact)	Adjusted impact estimate Based on any use	Based on full use	
Reading				
Full sample	-3.3	-4.2	-5.6	0.18
Subgroups				
SINI	-2.1	-2.7	-3.6	0.48
Not SINI	-6.2	-7.7	-10.2	0.18
Elementary students	-5.9*	-7.3	-9.5	0.04
Middle/high school students	1.7	2.4	3.3	0.72
Reading performance below median	-4.1	-5.2	-6.7	0.28
Reading performance above median	-2.5	-3.1	-4.3	0.47
Mathematics performance below median	-5.0	-6.4	-8.4	0.20
Mathematics performance above median	-1.8	-2.3	-3.1	0.60
Mathematics				
Full sample	-9.9*	-12.6	-16.7	<0.01
Subgroups				
SINI	-8.9*	-11.4	-15.1	0.03
Not SINI	-12.3*	-15.3	-20.2	0.02
Elementary students	-13.0*	-16.0	-20.9	<0.01
Middle/high school students	-3.9	-5.4	-7.4	0.54
Reading performance below median	-8.1	-10.3	-13.3	0.12
Reading performance above median	-11.5*	-14.7	-20.0	0.01
Mathematics performance below median	-12.7*	-16.2	-21.3	0.02
Mathematics performance above median	-7.8*	-9.9	-13.1	0.05†

†Actual value is less than 0.05.

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

SOURCE: Estimates were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests administered two years after application.

C-3. Sensitivity Analysis for School Safety as Reported by Students

The main text reported that the OSP program increased the percentage of students reporting that their school was very safe. The student survey had a low response rate and the response rate also differed between the treatment and control groups. The low overall rate and the differential of the rate potentially leads to an incorrect measure of the program's impact. The incorrectness would arise through some combination of students in the control group who did not respond to the survey being more likely to

report schools being safer, and students in the treatment group who did not respond to the survey being less likely to report schools being safer.

We assessed whether the impacts potentially were affected by nonresponse by estimating a model in which whether students responded was a function of covariates used in the impact models. There is more reason to be concerned about nonresponse if it is correlated with other variables. (If nonresponse was random, it acted the same as shrinking the sample size without affecting other aspects of the groups.) The results indicated that response was correlated with the treatment indicator and three of the 17 covariates, the difference between a student's age and the median age of the grade level (the study's variable denoting whether students were overage for their grade), whether a student had a disability, and family income (table C-3). Students were more likely to respond when they were in the treatment group or had higher family income, and less likely to respond if they were overage for grade or had a disability.

Table C-3. Significant coefficients from model of response to student survey

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Treatment status	0.160	<0.0001
Family income (in \$1,000s)	0.003	0.0172
Difference from median age	-0.100	0.0003
Disability	-0.120	0.0051

SOURCE: Coefficients were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

These significant correlations suggest that impacts *could* be mismeasured, but are not evidence that they *were* mismeasured. To explore the issue further, we introduced a possibility that both nonresponse and the safety outcome were correlated with a variable that was not observed, termed a “hidden variable” in the literature (see Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983; Imbens and Rubin 2015, chapter 22). As Imbens and Rubin note, in most research contexts, failing to account for this hidden variable is likely to have a smaller impact on findings than failing to account for the variables that are not hidden. Studies typically collect data on variables deemed most likely to be correlated with outcomes.

To operationalize this insight, thirteen regression models were run in which the impact on student safety was measured leaving out one covariate at a time (each covariate became a hidden variable). The results suggest the impact reported in the main text is unlikely to be the result of a hidden variable (table C-4). The result with all covariates in the model was an impact of 11.6 percentage points. Most estimates with a dropped covariate were within a tenth of the estimate from the full model. The largest difference was four-tenths of a percentage point.

This analysis does not mean there was no hidden variable. It indicates that the impact measure was robust to 14 different covariates being one of the hidden variables. For a truly hidden variable to affect results more, it would need to be both correlated with nonresponse *and* correlated with the outcome to a stronger degree than any of the 14 variables examined here. Considering the range covered by these variables, it is difficult to think what that variable could be.

Table C-4. Sensitivity of student safety impact estimate to dropping covariates

	Impact estimate	p-value
Full Model	11.6%	0.013
Covariate dropped		
Reading score	11.8	0.012
Mathematics score	11.8	0.012
Student is female	11.9	0.010
Student is black	12.0	0.010
Student has disability or other challenges	11.5	0.013
Student attending a SINI school	11.5	0.014
Student age difference from median age of grade	11.4	0.014
Parent has any college education	11.4	0.013
Parent rating of school satisfaction	11.7	0.012
Parent rating of school safety	11.6	0.012
Parent is employed	11.6	0.013
Household income	11.6	0.012
Number of children in household	11.4	0.014
Months at current address	11.7	0.012

NOTE: All covariates are measured at the time of application.

SOURCE: Estimates were generated from the study's regression models, as described in chapter 2. Student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

C-4. Comparing Impacts Between the Study's Two Followup Years

The study previously reported a negative impact on mathematics scores of 5.4 percentile points one year after students applied to the OSP (see Dynarski et. al 2017, figure 2). The negative impact on mathematics scores two years after students applied was 8.0 percentile points (see figure 8 of chapter 4 in this report). Simply comparing the two numbers, it seems that the negative impact in the second year is larger. However, both impacts are subject to sampling variance, and it is useful to test statistically whether the larger negative impact could arise because of this variance.⁴³

To test for differences between impacts in the first and second years, the study first restricted the sample to students who had test scores at the time of application and in both of the subsequent followup years. The impact model (see appendix section B-3) then was augmented by creating an interaction variable for whether a student was in the treatment group (the conventional treatment indicator) and whether the test score was from the second year. This “time by treatment” interaction variable measures the amount by which the first-year impact shifted in the second year. The hypothesis of whether the difference between impacts in the two years is statistically significant can then be assessed by a standard test of the significance of the estimated coefficient for this interaction variable.⁴⁴

⁴³ For example, the sample size was 1,074 students in the first year of followup testing in mathematics and 982 in the second year. While most students completed testing in both years, some completed tests at only one of the two time points.

⁴⁴ Nonresponse weights for the second-year sample can differ from nonresponse weights for the longitudinal sample of students tested in both years. Appendix B provides details on how longitudinal weights were constructed to account for this.

The tests indicate that the difference for mathematics score impacts is not statistically significant ($p = 0.21$) (table C-5). The negative impact for reading is quite similar in both years and, as expected, the statistical test indicates that the difference between negative impacts is not statistically significant ($p = 0.97$).⁴⁵

Table C-5. Comparing test score impacts in the first and second years (students tested in both years only)

	Reading scale scores	Mathematics scale scores
Impact in first year	-3.80	-7.60
Impact in second year	-3.70	-12.40
<i>p</i> -value of difference	0.97	0.21

NOTE: Sample size is 842 students for reading and 839 students for mathematics. Impacts reported here for the longitudinal sample (i.e., students tested in both years) differ from previously reported negative impacts for the first-year sample and negative impacts for the second-year sample.

SOURCE: Coefficients for the longitudinal sample were generated from the study's regression models. *TerraNova Third Edition* reading and mathematics tests.

C-5. Mediation Analysis of School Choice and Parent Satisfaction

There are many options for school choice available in DC. In addition to private schools, DC operates a common lottery that enables parents to apply for their child to be admitted to any charter school or traditional public school in the city. If parents being able to choose a school contributes to higher parent satisfaction, the OSP program will increase satisfaction to the extent that a larger proportion of parents offered scholarships choose a school compared with parents not offered scholarships.

The amount by which a scholarship offer increases satisfaction can be considered to have two components: (1) the offer makes private schools more affordable, and (2) choosing a school other than their assigned neighborhood school leads to increased satisfaction. The findings on general parent satisfaction reported in chapter 4 essentially combine the two components into a single estimate—the amount by which the offer increases satisfaction in the treatment group compared with the control group. It is possible to measure the two components separately, though there are some limitations to this approach that will be noted below. The steps are to estimate two models: first, the extent to which the scholarship offer leads to more choice, and, second, the extent to which choice increases satisfaction. Multiplying these two estimates yields a measure of the extent to which satisfaction is “mediated” by choice.

Three key pieces of data for this analysis are: (1) whether parents received a scholarship offer, which is the treatment indicator, (2) a parent's general satisfaction with their child's school, which is the outcome, and (3) whether parents exercised choice. The study assumed parents had exercised choice if

⁴⁵ The second-year impact for mathematics was highly statistically significant, with a p -value of less than 0.01 (appendix table A-8). What is being tested here, however, is whether the impact is different from the previous year. The statistical tests essentially are signaling that the difference in impact between the two years is not large enough to say with confidence that the size of the impact has changed. Conventional statistical calculations suggest that the difference between impact on mathematics scores would have been statistically significant if the sample had been larger by 500 students (assuming the additional students had the same average scores in the first and second years). Alternatively, the current sample size would have yielded a statistically significant impact on mathematics scores if it had been more negative by 2 scale score points.

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their child was either attending a charter or private school, or if they reported that their child did not attend their neighborhood school.⁴⁶ Using this definition, 81 percent of parents in the study's second-year impact sample had chosen their child's school. The percentage of parents choosing a school was higher in the treatment group than the control group, 89 percent compared with 71 percent (see chapter 4, table 7).

The results of the mediation analysis estimation (table C-6) show that (1) the scholarship offer increased the likelihood that parents chose a school by 18.9 percentage points, and that (2) choosing a school increased parent satisfaction by 12.3 percentage points. The resulting "mediating pathway" increased satisfaction by 2.3 percentage points and was statistically significant ($p = 0.008$). The program's impact on parents' general satisfaction was 4.1 percentage points (see chapter 4, figure 17), which suggests about 50 percent of the impact is mediated by the effects the scholarship offer had on increasing choice. This is termed "partial mediation"; it would have been "full mediation" if the pathway had equaled the overall impact. The findings support the hypothesis that being able to choose a school increases parent satisfaction.

Limitations of the mediation analysis should be kept in mind. Generally, the method does not yield estimates with the causal validity of impacts estimated within the main experiment. The experiment randomly assigns scholarship offers to parents, which creates the treatment and control groups, but it does not randomly assign the value of the choice variable. Factors that cannot be observed about parents may affect whether they choose their child's school, and those factors may differ between the treatment and control groups. Also, it is possible that there are other mediating pathways, and that the pathway investigated here is itself moderated by other variables—for example, the pathway may be stronger for some kinds of families.

Table C-6. Results of mediation analysis of effects of choice on parent satisfaction

	Coefficient (as percent)	Standard error	p-value
Effect of scholarship offer on choice (a)	18.9	2.9	<0.001
Effect of choice on satisfaction (b)	12.3	4.2	0.003
Mediating pathway (a*b)	2.3	0.9	0.008 [†]

[†] The p-value was calculated using the Sobel test (Preacher and Leonardelli 2010; <http://quantosy.org/sobel/sobel.htm>).

SOURCE: Coefficients were generated from the study's mediation analysis regression models. School type obtained at followup testing (for school choice) and parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016 (for school choice and satisfaction).

⁴⁶ The study constructed an indicator of whether parents chose a school by first determining if their child attended a charter or private school, and, for students who were not attending charter or private schools, whether parents responded in the parent survey that their child did not attend the assigned neighborhood school. We did not rely exclusively on parent survey responses because they were inconsistent with the percentage of students attending a traditional public school: 39 percent of parents responded that their child was attending an assigned neighborhood school, but only 30 percent of students attended a traditional public school. Possibly, parents viewed an "assigned neighborhood school" as one that was in their neighborhood, which describes many charter schools in DC, or some parents may have viewed an "assigned" school as one selected in the common lottery, if they applied to it. The constructed variable essentially assigned a "no" response to this question if the child attended a charter or private school, regardless of the parent's response. Note also that if students enrolled in a school of choice but returned to a traditional public school within the two years, they would be coded as not having exercised choice.

C-6. Supplemental Tables

Parent Satisfaction

In addition to rating their child's school with a letter grade as the main measure of satisfaction, parents also provided ratings of their satisfaction with 16 specific aspects of their child's school. Simple comparisons of the percentage of parents who chose one of four responses—which corresponded to very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, and very satisfied—are informative about what may be driving the letter grades that parents give schools. Eight of the 16 items were significantly higher for the treatment group (table C-7). For example, 41 percent of treatment group parents were “very satisfied” with academic quality compared with 33 percent of control group parents.

Table C-7. Percentage of parents reporting satisfaction with specific aspects of their child's school

How satisfied are you with the following aspects of this child's current school?	Treatment	Control	p-value
Location of school			0.36
Very dissatisfied	2.1	2.6	
Dissatisfied	5.7	6.7	
Satisfied	46.1	49.6	
Very satisfied	46.1	41.1	
School safety			0.18
Very dissatisfied	2.4	2.4	
Dissatisfied	8.5	10.5	
Satisfied	45.6	49.7	
Very satisfied	43.5	37.5	
Class sizes			<0.01*
Very dissatisfied	2.0	4.5	
Dissatisfied	8.5	12.9	
Satisfied	46.5	51.8	
Very satisfied	43.0	30.9	
School facilities			0.05
Very dissatisfied	2.4	2.9	
Dissatisfied	9.9	10.0	
Satisfied	51.3	58.1	
Very satisfied	36.5	29.1	
Respect between teachers and students			<0.01*
Very dissatisfied	2.6	4.2	
Dissatisfied	10.4	10.0	
Satisfied	42.3	50.9	
Very satisfied	44.7	34.9	
How much teachers inform parents of students' progress			0.06
Very dissatisfied	2.9	2.5	
Dissatisfied	9.1	12.3	
Satisfied	41.7	45.9	
Very satisfied	46.3	39.3	
How much students can observe religious traditions			<0.01*
Very dissatisfied	4.0	6.4	
Dissatisfied	7.5	14.3	
Satisfied	47.8	51.6	
Very satisfied	40.7	27.7	

See notes at end of table.

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Table C-7. Percentage of parents reporting satisfaction with specific aspects of their child's school (continued)

How satisfied are you with the following aspects of this child's current school?	Treatment	Control	p-value
Parental involvement in the school			0.01*
Very dissatisfied	2.7	2.9	
Dissatisfied	8.4	13.9	
Satisfied	53.1	53.2	
Very satisfied	35.9	30.0	
Discipline at the school			0.01*
Very dissatisfied	4.0	5.8	
Dissatisfied	11.1	13.5	
Satisfied	44.6	49.2	
Very satisfied	40.3	31.5	
Academic quality			<0.01*
Very dissatisfied	3.1	5.7	
Dissatisfied	9.6	13.5	
Satisfied	46.4	47.9	
Very satisfied	41.0	32.9	
Racial mix of students			0.01*
Very dissatisfied	2.3	5.3	
Dissatisfied	12.8	15.4	
Satisfied	53.2	53.3	
Very satisfied	31.7	26.0	
Services for children with special needs			0.50
Very dissatisfied	7.8	7.7	
Dissatisfied	13.9	13.7	
Satisfied	47.0	51.1	
Very satisfied	31.4	27.5	
Access to information about the school through printed materials or the school website			0.10
Very dissatisfied	2.6	3.7	
Dissatisfied	8.7	8.8	
Satisfied	47.8	53.3	
Very satisfied	40.9	34.2	
Services for students who struggle academically			0.10
Very dissatisfied	5.9	6.2	
Dissatisfied	16.4	12.1	
Satisfied	47.0	53.3	
Very satisfied	30.7	28.4	
Availability of computers			0.03*
Very dissatisfied	3.8	5.5	
Dissatisfied	12.6	11.2	
Satisfied	45.4	52.0	
Very satisfied	38.2	31.3	
Teacher absenteeism			0.45
Very dissatisfied	3.0	3.6	
Dissatisfied	7.0	6.7	
Satisfied	54.0	58.0	
Very satisfied	36.0	31.8	

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: To calculate p-values, for each item a chi-squared test (weighted by the composite weight) was conducted so that the distributions of frequencies were the same for the treatment group and the control group. Because the items were not primary outcomes, the p-values had not been adjusted for multiple comparisons. Therefore, the statistical significance for individual items should be interpreted with caution.

SOURCE: Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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Student Safety

In addition to a question about general school safety, which is the main outcome analyzed in the text, the student survey also asked whether various negative events had happened to students at school. Students indicated whether the events had happened to them never, once or twice, or three or more times. Treatment and control group proportions for each of the eight items are shown in table C-8. There were no statistically significant differences between the treatment and control group.

Table C-8. Percentage of students reporting negative safety incidents that occurred at school

Did the following ever happen to you at school this year?	Treatment	Control	p-value
Had something stolen from your desk, locker, or other place			0.89
Never	55.1	57.1	
Once or twice	34.9	33.4	
Three times or more	10.1	9.5	
Been forced by other kids to give them money or my stuff			0.41
Never	91.4	94.0	
Once or twice	7.2	4.6	
Three times or more	1.4	1.5	
Been offered drugs			0.89
Never	93.3	92.8	
Once or more times	4.7	4.6	
Three times or more	2.1	2.6	
Been physically hurt by another student			0.24
Never	77.8	75.6	
Once or twice	17.4	16.1	
Three times or more	4.8	8.3	
Been threatened with physical harm			0.08
Never	81.0	75.6	
Once or twice	13.8	14.2	
Three times or more	5.2	10.2	
Seen anyone with a real or toy gun or knife at school			0.49
Never	85.5	82.2	
Once or twice	11.6	13.4	
Three times or more	3.0	4.5	
Been bullied at school			0.73
Never	71.6	72.2	
Once or twice	19.5	17.5	
Three times or more	8.8	10.3	
Been called a bad name			0.16
Never	45.8	48.8	
Once or twice	31.7	24.8	
Three times or more	22.4	26.5	

NOTE: To calculate p-values, for each item a chi-squared test (weighted by the composite weight) was conducted so that the distributions of frequencies were the same for the treatment group and the control group. Because the items were not primary outcomes, the p-values had not been adjusted for multiple comparisons. Therefore, the statistical significance for individual items should be interpreted with caution.

SOURCE: Student surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

Parent Involvement in Education

Two sets of items from the parent survey were used to create the main measures of parent involvement for the impact study. For parent involvement in education at school, parents indicated whether various school events happened never, once, 2 or 3 times, or 4 or more times. For each item, the study assigned a value of 0, 1, 2.5, or 5, depending on the parent response, and then added the resulting eight numbers. The resulting sum is a general measure of how many times parents participated in the various activities with the child's school.

For education involvement in the home, parents could indicate they never did the activity or did an activity once, 2 or 3 times, 4 or 5 times, or 6 or more times. The study used the same procedure described to construct a general measure of involvement, by assigning values to each category (in this case, the values were 0, 1, 2.5, 4.5, and 7), and summing the numbers for the four items.

For individual items that made up the general measures, most of the differences in parent involvement were not statistically significant (tables C-9 and C-10). Parents of students in the control group were more likely to report accompanying students on class trips during the school year than parents in the treatment group (table C-9). A small proportion of parents in the treatment group talked with their child at least once a month about school—2.5 percent in the treatment group compared with 0.61 percent in the control group—which created a significant difference for the distribution of that variable (table C-10).

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Table C-9. Percentage of parents reporting involvement in education activities at school

During this school year, how often did you do the following related to this child's school...	Treatment	Control	p-value
Receive report cards about this child's performance			0.32
Never	1.4	2.6	
Once	4.5	4.0	
2 or 3 times	53.5	49.9	
4 or more times	40.6	43.5	
Receive information about this child's school, such as newsletters and school notices			0.14
Never	4.5	5.4	
Once	4.2	5.1	
2 or 3 times	20.4	25.1	
4 or more times	70.8	64.4	
Communicate with a teacher informally (in person, by phone, or via email)			0.20
Never	2.5	4.1	
Once	7.5	6.6	
2 or 3 times	24.7	28.0	
4 or more times	65.3	61.2	
Attend parent-teacher conferences			0.12
Never	5.5	8.2	
Once	13.9	11.8	
2 or 3 times	47.4	43.7	
4 or more times	33.3	36.3	
Attend school activities for families (dinners, student presentations, open houses, family mathematics, or science nights)			0.74
Never	15.2	15.5	
Once	15.8	17.0	
2 or 3 times	36.3	33.3	
4 or more times	32.7	34.2	
Volunteer in the school			0.83
Never	39.9	41.5	
Once	16.0	16.2	
2 or 3 times	24.3	24.7	
4 or more times	19.8	17.7	
Attend a PTA meeting (or other similar organization meeting)			0.90
Never	24.1	24.1	
Once	18.2	16.6	
2 or 3 times	31.8	32.6	
4 or more times	25.9	26.6	
Accompany students on class trips			<0.01*
Never	57.8	48.8	
Once	15.7	14.3	
2 or 3 times	16.3	19.0	
4 or more times	10.3	18.0	

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: To calculate p-values, for each item a chi-squared test (weighted by the composite weight) was conducted so that the distributions of frequencies were the same for the treatment group and the control group. Because the items were not primary outcomes, the p-values had not been adjusted for multiple comparisons. Therefore, the statistical significance for individual items should be interpreted with caution.

SOURCE: Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.

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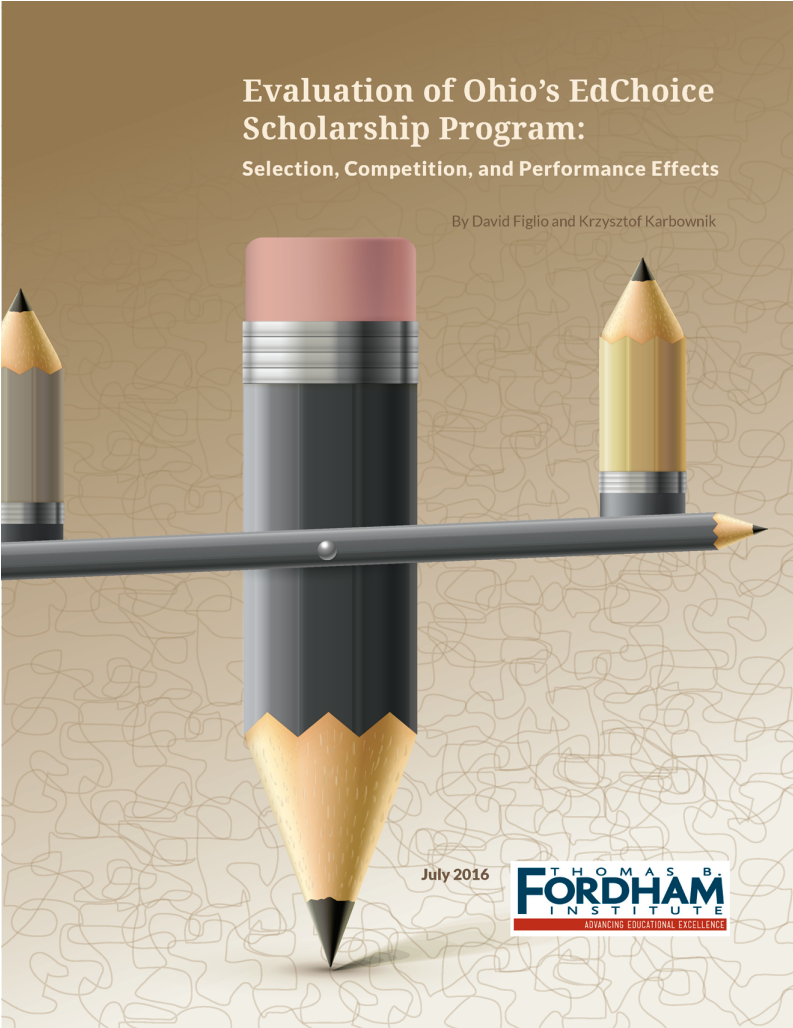
Table C-10. Percentage of parents reporting involvement in education activities at home

In the past month, how often did you do the following...	Treatment	Control	p-value
Help this child with his or her homework			0.09
Never	6.5	9.0	
Once	3.6	6.2	
2 or 3 times	16.8	15.1	
4 or 5 times	14.7	15.6	
6 or more times	58.4	54.2	
Help this child with reading or mathematics that was not part of his or her homework			0.46
Never	12.0	12.6	
Once	4.8	2.8	
2 or 3 times	15.8	16.5	
4 or 5 times	15.6	17.1	
6 or more times	51.8	51.0	
Talk to this child about his or her experiences in school			0.04*
Never	0.7	1.8	
Once	2.5	0.6	
2 or 3 times	6.8	7.6	
4 or 5 times	12.3	12.7	
6 or more times	77.8	77.4	
Work with this child on a school project			0.08
Never	13.7	16.6	
Once	14.9	13.6	
2 or 3 times	28.0	21.6	
4 or 5 times	15.2	16.2	
6 or more times	28.2	32.0	

*Difference between the treatment group and the control group is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE: To calculate p-values, for each item a chi-squared test (weighted by the composite weight) was conducted so that the distributions of frequencies were the same for the treatment group and the control group. Because the items were not primary outcomes, the p-values had not been adjusted for multiple comparisons. Therefore, the statistical significance for individual items should be interpreted with caution.

SOURCE: Parent surveys for OSP evaluation, 2014–2016.



Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program:

Selection, Competition, and Performance Effects

By David Figlio and Krzysztof Karbownik

Foreword by Aaron Churchill and Chad L. Aldis

July 2016



The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is the nation's leader in advancing educational excellence for every child through quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as on-the-ground action and advocacy in Ohio. It is affiliated with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and this publication is a joint project of the Foundation and the Institute. For further information, please visit our website at www.edexcellence.net or write to the Institute at 100 E. Broad St., Suite 2430, Columbus, OH 43215. The Institute is neither connected with nor sponsored by Fordham University.

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Foreword

By Aaron Churchill and Chad L. Aldis

Shortly after Ohio lawmakers enacted a new voucher program in 2005, the state budget office wrote in its fiscal analysis, “The Educational Choice Scholarships are not only intended to offer another route for student success, but also to impel the administration and teaching staff of a failing school building to improve upon their students’ academic performance.” As economist Milton Friedman had theorized decades earlier, Ohio legislators believed that increased choice and competition would boost education outcomes across the board. “Competition” in the words of Stanford’s Caroline Hoxby, “would be the proverbial rising tide that lifts all boats.”

Today, the EdChoice program provides publicly funded vouchers (or “scholarships”) to more than eighteen thousand Buckeye students, youngsters previously assigned to some of the state’s lowest-performing schools, located primarily in low-income urban communities.¹ That much is known. Yet remarkably little else is known about the program. Which children are using EdChoice when given the opportunity? Is the initiative faithfully working as its founders intended? Are participating students blossoming academically in their private schools of choice? Does the increased competition associated with EdChoice lead to improvements in the public schools that these kids left?

The present study utilizes longitudinal student data from 2003–04 to 2012–13 to answer these important questions. Specifically, the analysis utilizes the results from state tests—which all EdChoice students are required to take—to examine the vouchers’ effects on two groups of pupils. First, the study inspects the scores of public school students who were eligible for vouchers—but did not take one—in order to gauge the competitive effects of EdChoice (i.e., its impact on traditional public school students and their schools). Second, it examines the academic impact of EdChoice on those students who actually use the vouchers to attend private schools.

This is the first study of EdChoice that uses individual student-level data, allowing for a rigorous evaluation of the program’s effectiveness. (Earlier analyses by Matthew Carr and Greg Forster used school-level data to explore its competitive impact.) To lead the research, we tapped Dr. David Figlio of Northwestern University, a distinguished economist who has carried out examinations of Florida’s tax credit scholarship program. He has also written extensively on school accountability, teacher quality, and competition. Given his experience, Dr. Figlio is exceptionally qualified to lead a careful, independent evaluation of Ohio’s EdChoice program.

In this report, he sets forth three main findings:

- While the students who participate in EdChoice—the pupils who actually use a voucher to attend private schools—are primarily low-income and minority children, they are relatively less disadvantaged than other voucher-eligible students. Figlio reports that more than three in four participants are economically disadvantaged, and three in five are black or Hispanic. Viewed in relation to Ohio’s public school population as a whole, students in EdChoice are highly disadvantaged—not surprising, given eligibility rules that require participants to have attended a low-achieving public school. But relative to students who are eligible for vouchers but choose not to use them, the participants in EdChoice are somewhat higher-achieving and somewhat less economically disadvantaged. This finding may be, in part, an artifact of the program’s basic design: It allows private schools to retain control over admissions, and a child must gain admission into a private school before he or she can apply for a voucher. This multi-step process might be more easily navigated by relatively more advantaged families; their children might also be more likely to meet the private schools’ admissions requirements.

¹ In June 2013, Ohio lawmakers created a new voucher program, referred to as the EdChoice Expansion program, for which eligibility is based on family income. This program is starting by phasing in kindergarteners and expanding by one grade level per year. The present research does not cover the income-based EdChoice Expansion. It is limited to the original EdChoice program for which eligibility depends on having attended a low-performing district school.

- EdChoice improved the achievement of the public school students who were eligible for the voucher but did not use it. When examining the test results of pupils attending public schools just above and below the eligibility threshold, the analysis finds that achievement in math and reading rose modestly as a result of voucher competition. (The analysis leverages the state's voucher eligibility rules to isolate voucher competition from other potential competitive effects, such as charter schools.) In other words, the voucher program has worked as intended when it comes to competitive effects. Importantly, this finding helps to address the concern that such programs may hurt students who remain in their public schools, either as a result of funds lost by those schools or the exodus of higher-performing peers. Quite the opposite has occurred in the case of EdChoice: Achievement improved when the voucher program was introduced and public schools faced stiffer competition (and the risk of losing their own students).
- The students who use vouchers to attend private schools have fared worse academically compared to their closely matched peers attending public schools. The study finds negative effects that are greater in math than in English language arts. Such impacts also appear to persist over time, suggesting that the results are not driven simply by the setbacks that typically accompany any change of school.

Let us acknowledge that we did not expect—or, frankly, wish—to see these negative effects for voucher participants; but it's important to report honestly on what the analysis showed and at least speculate on what may be causing these results. One factor might be related to the limits of credible evaluation: while the rigor of the methodology ensured "apples-to-apples" comparisons of student achievement, Dr. Figlio was limited to studying students who attended (or had left) public schools that were just above or below the state's cutoff for "low-performing." By definition, this group did not include the very lowest-performing schools in the state. It's possible that students who used a voucher to leave one of the latter schools might have improved their achievement; we simply cannot know from this study. The negative effects could also be related to different testing environments—higher stakes for public than private schools—or to curricular differences between what is taught in private schools and the content that's assessed on state tests. Finally, although this analysis does not enable us to identify individual schools as high- or low-performing, it may be the case that some of the private schools accepting EdChoice students are themselves not performing as well as they should.

Taken as a whole, the results reported here for Ohio's EdChoice program—one of the nation's largest voucher programs—are a mixed bag. The program benefitted, albeit modestly, thousands of public-school students; yet among the somewhat small number of participants studied here, the results are negative. The study mirrors important trends that can be seen in other voucher research. The modest, positive competitive effect on public school achievement replicates findings from jurisdictions like Florida, Louisiana, and Milwaukee, findings that also offered evidence that voucher competition improved public school outcomes. These are, of course, encouraging for advocates of competition and choice. Yet this study also extends a recent (and, to us, unwelcome) trend that finds negative effects for voucher participants in large statewide programs. While earlier evaluations of privately and publicly funded scholarship programs—usually administered at the city level—found neutral-to-positive impacts on participants, newer studies of Louisiana's and Indiana's statewide programs have uncovered negative results, particularly in math.

There's been much discussion about what might be behind these participant results. Is too much regulation discouraging high-quality private schools from joining the program? Are state exams failing to capture important private school contributions to student success? Do large, statewide programs lack the tools and resources to ensure quality at scale? Or are private schools simply struggling to raise achievement—especially in math—in relation to their public school counterparts? Some or all of these (or other) factors may be at work, but no one really knows for certain. More research on the effects of statewide voucher programs is obviously warranted.

Even though we don't have all the answers, we believe that thoughtful policy makers can draw from the extant

research as well as on-the-ground experience to give these programs the best chance of succeeding for more students, whether attending public or private schools. The pertinent lessons seem to us applicable both in states considering new private school choice programs and in states (like Ohio) that are seeking to improve an existing program.

First, we need to foster a healthy, competitive environment in K–12 education. A competitive jolt can awaken sleepy, lazy, or slipshod schools to clean up their act and attend more closely to the academic needs of their students. On the policy side, this means that lawmakers should continue to encourage a rich supply of school options, including not just private schools (in their many flavors, including religious and non-sectarian) but also public charter, STEM, and career and technical schools. At the same time, families can do their part by demanding more quality school choices. Competition and choice—two sides of the same coin—can incentivize all schools to work harder at meeting the needs of their pupils.

Second, policy makers should resist calls to pile more input-based regulations upon voucher-accepting private schools. Ohio's private schools already face heavier regulation than those in many states. For example, they must adhere to state operating standards and hire state-licensed or certified teachers. Most of this was true before EdChoice came along (which makes less likely the "overregulation" explanation for disappointing participant results, at least in Ohio). Policy makers should tread lightly when adding to schools' regulatory burdens. After all, freedom from regulation is precisely what makes private schools different and—for many—worth attending in the first place.

Third, as this study suggests, private schools likely vary when it comes to quality, and the public needs maximum transparency about this. Accordingly, state leaders should help families better understand the quality of their options by providing easy-to-compare information on the performance of voucher-accepting private schools. While Ohio already reports voucher students' proficiency rates at the school level (subject to FERPA limitations), we know that those results are likely to be conflated with non-schooling factors like family income. They are also hard to track down. To be fair to private schools that educate disadvantaged voucher pupils, we suggest the adoption of a value-added measure—a school quality indicator that is more poverty-neutral than conventional academic proficiency rates. States (including Ohio) should make sure that these academic outcomes for voucher-accepting private schools are easily accessible to parents, perhaps in a report-card-like format akin to those adopted for public schools. In Ohio, this would not add any additional testing or regulatory requirements on private schools.

Fourth, policy makers should craft simple, parent-friendly program rules. From the perspective of families, EdChoice is fairly complex, which may have influenced who participates in it. Eligibility hinges on public schools' annual ratings from the state—which can change from year to year—and the state has no obligation to notify parents of their children's eligibility. This means that families must bestir themselves to visit the state's website or seek eligibility information through other channels. To ensure awareness, states should require direct notification of eligibility from the state department of education or a competent nonprofit agency. (This should also happen when eligibility is based on income.) Making matters more complicated, current EdChoice application rules require eligible students first to gain admission to a private school; then the school applies to the state for a voucher. It would be far simpler for parents if they could apply directly to the state for a voucher and then shop for the right private school. This process would not only empower parents but also give policy makers a much clearer picture of the demand for vouchers.

The present report breaks important new ground, but it is by no means the final word on EdChoice. We still have much to learn, including whether vouchers impact non-testing outcomes such as post-secondary success. We also need a deeper understanding about the quality of individual private schools. But the information set forth in the pages that follow is critically important as thoughtful policy makers consider the design and implementation of voucher programs, both in Ohio and across the nation. Programs that aim to better the lives of children must face scrutiny from independent, credible evaluators. Even when its findings are unexpected and painful, rigorous, disinterested evaluation remains the best way to prod improvements and make progress toward the program's goals. In the case of EdChoice, the program appears to have met one of the two

objectives conceived by its founders: Competition has spurred some public school improvement. The challenge ahead is to forge a stronger EdChoice program, one that can lead to widespread academic improvements for children who take their scholarships to the state's private schools.



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- David Figlio and Krzysztof Karbownik

1. Introduction

In June 2005, the State of Ohio enacted the Educational Choice Scholarship Program (EdChoice, initially called the Educational Choice Scholarship Pilot Program), which offered scholarships to students assigned to public schools considered consistently poor-performing by the Ohio Department of Education, to take effect during the 2006-07 academic year.¹ At first, only students assigned to schools receiving the lowest rating, academic emergency, for three consecutive years were to be eligible for scholarships, which were worth up to \$4,250 for elementary and middle school-aged students and up to \$5,000 for high school students, but in Spring 2006 the rules for qualification were relaxed such that students assigned to schools rated either as under academic emergency or under academic watch for three consecutive years would be eligible for scholarships. In the 2006-07 academic year, 3,141 students from 99 traditional public schools attended private schools under the EdChoice program. In December 2006, the Ohio Legislature further relaxed the eligibility criteria such that students assigned to a school under either academic emergency or academic watch in two of the preceding three years would be eligible for EdChoice scholarships. As a consequence, the number of public schools with voucher-eligible students increased considerably, to 213 schools, and in the 2007-08 academic year 6,943 students attended private schools under the EdChoice program. By 2013-14, 18,080 students were attending private schools under the voucher program.² In the 2013-14 academic year, the program was further expanded to become available to economically disadvantaged students, regardless of school-quality measures; in the 2013-14 academic year, this expansion was for Kindergarteners only. However, in subsequent years, the program will phase in one grade at a time.

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of the effects of the EdChoice program on students and schools in Ohio using the most appropriate tools for causal inference possible, as determined by the authors, given how the program was implemented. Throughout the report, we present occasional references from the related scholarly literature; these references are intended to be representative but not comprehensive. Although the nature of program implementation precludes the use of experimental methods, it does still provide opportunities for quasi-experimental research designs. We investigate three interrelated questions:

- (1) When students are offered the opportunity to attend private schools under the EdChoice program, which students ultimately attend private schools?
- (2) What are the effects of the EdChoice program on the reading and mathematics performance of students who continue to attend traditional public schools?
- (3) What are the effects of participation in the EdChoice program on the reading and mathematics performance of students who move to the private sector as a consequence of the program?

We make use of anonymized student-level data between the 2003-04 and 2012-13 academic years, provided by the Ohio Department Education, to address each of these questions in turn in the sections below. Ohio requires that EdChoice program participants in private schools take the Ohio Achievement Assessments, and the strong majority of these students complied with this requirement (and were successfully matched to Ohio Department of Education administrative data systems), starting in the 2007-08 academic year and especially beginning in the 2008-09 academic year.³ In each case, we chose the years of the program that allowed for the most credible causal inference, regardless of whether the years were the most current. Our general summary of the evidence is as follows:

(1) There appears to be positive selection, as measured by prior academic performance and family advantage, among voucher-eligible students into private schools as part of the EdChoice program. Although a substantial majority of the students participating in the program, as well as their peers remaining in public schools, tend to be from low-income backgrounds, those students leaving for private schools under the program tend to be more advantaged and higher performing than their peers who were eligible to participate in the program but who remained in public schools.

(2) Although the estimates are sensitive to the specific assumptions made, and some assumptions lead to zero rather than positive findings, the evidence in general suggests that the EdChoice program improved the performance of students eligible to participate—most of whom remained in the public schools. The estimated improvements are typically in the range of one-eighth of the magnitude of the black-white test-score gap. This is particularly true regarding our analysis of schools newly eligible in 2007–08, the first year for which we feel relatively confident that we can make causal claims about the performance effects of the EdChoice program. Our research design estimates the competitive effects for public schools that are relatively high-performing compared to all eligible schools (that is, schools that have the highest performance index values but are still low enough to have students eligible for EdChoice scholarships), so we have less confidence in extrapolating these positive findings to public schools with considerably lower levels of performance.

(3) We can only credibly study the performance effects of moving to private schools under the EdChoice program for those students leaving comparatively high-achieving public schools. Those students, on average, who move to private schools under the EdChoice program tend to perform considerably worse than observationally similar students who remained in public schools. The magnitudes of this negative estimated effect are relatively large—around three times the positive estimated competitive effect (also estimated for the relatively high-performing public schools that were eligible to participate) of the EdChoice program. These differences cannot be explained by the disruptions associated with changing schools. It may be the case that there are less negative, or even positive, performance effects for students moving to private schools from lower-performing public schools, but we do not feel comfortable studying this group of students.

In summary, the evidence regarding the effects of EdChoice program suggests that while higher-performing students tend to leave public schools to attend private schools under the EdChoice program, the students who remain in the public schools—at least, those public schools that were comparatively high achieving—generally perform better on statewide tests as a consequence of EdChoice vouchers being available to students in a school. On the other hand, those students who leave these comparatively high-achieving public schools to go to private schools appear to perform worse than they would have had they remained in the public schools (which we estimate to have improved as a consequence of the introduction of EdChoice). Together, it appears that EdChoice has benefitted the majority of students, but the students who actually left the public schools—at least those on the margin of eligibility—perform worse on statewide tests. Although test performance is only one measure of educational success, these findings suggest that a detailed exploration of the possible causes of the negative test-score results (for instance, which private schools participate in the program, policies on school-grade retention, test-curriculum alignment, and the like) may be warranted.

2. History and background on the Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program

In June 2005, Ohio lawmakers enacted the EdChoice program, with 2006–07 as the first year of implementation. A student's eligibility for an EdChoice voucher is premised on the academic performance of the traditional district school he or she is slated to attend. The rationale behind this model is captured in the following statement by the Ohio Office of Budget and Management: "The Educational Choice Scholarships are not only intended to offer another route for student success, but also to impel the administration and teaching staff of a failing school building to improve upon their students' academic performance."⁴

The initial EdChoice legislation (House Bill [HB] 66) defined a low-performing public school as one receiving three consecutive years of academic emergency ratings—the state's lowest classification. Shortly thereafter, legislators expanded the definition to also include schools receiving ratings of academic watch for three straight years (HB 530, enacted in March 2006). In December 2006, the legislature again modified the criteria by identifying low-performing schools based on whether they received ratings of either academic watch or academic emergency in two of the past three years (HB 79). After this flurry of early legislation, the eligibility criteria remained consistent until Ohio began its transition to A-to-F school ratings in 2012–13. To align with the new rating system, state law now designates EdChoice-eligible schools based on a D or F rating for two of the past three years on the state's key accountability measures (HB 555, enacted December 2012).

The state annually updates the list of designated EdChoice public schools. When the school ceases to meet the criteria, it is removed from the list. Students who received vouchers in previous years, however, remain eligible until they complete grade 12, provided they meet the following conditions: (1) they do not move to another district (though they remain eligible if assigned to another EdChoice-designated school in the new district); (2) they complete all required state achievement tests; and (3) they do not have more than twenty unexcused absences during a school year. Students across the state are eligible to participate in EdChoice if their assigned public schools meet the performance criteria defined in state law (except for Cleveland students, who are eligible to participate in a different voucher program).

Early EdChoice legislation (HB 79) set a cap on the number of available vouchers at 14,000. If the number of applications exceeded the cap, priority was, and still is, given to returning voucher recipients and new applicants who are low income. As the number of voucher applicants began to exceed the cap, a newly elected Ohio governor John Kasich and state lawmakers lifted the cap to 30,000 for 2011–12 and to 60,000 starting with the 2012–13 school year (HB 153, enacted in June 2011). To receive a voucher, parents and students first apply for admission to a participating private school. Once the student has been accepted, the private school submits a voucher application on behalf of the student.

As enacted in HB 66 in 2005, the initial amount of the EdChoice voucher was \$4,250 for students in grades K–8 and \$5,000 for students in grades 9–12 (or a smaller amount if the private school tuition is less than these amounts). Legislation passed in June 2015 (HB 64) that raised the maximum voucher amount to \$4,650 for K–8 pupils and \$5,900 for high school students (the high school amount increases to \$6,000 starting in 2016–17). The state deducts the voucher amount from the state aid received by the student's district of residence. When a student's family income is less than or equal to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, private schools cannot charge tuition greater than the voucher amount. For families with income above this level, private schools may charge tuition that is equal to the difference between the voucher amount and the regular tuition rate.

Ohio defines two categories of private (or nonpublic) schools: chartered nonpublic schools and nonchartered, non-tax-supported schools. In order to accept EdChoice vouchers, a private school must be a chartered nonpublic school. (In this context, "charter" does not refer to a public charter school.) A chartered nonpublic school must be approved by the state and adhere to state operating standards. These schools retain the right to have admissions standards; can offer pupils education based on certain beliefs, values, or religions; and may

charge tuition. Chartered nonpublic schools receive a modest amount of state aid to offset administrative costs related to state regulation, and their students are entitled to district-provided transportation.

Since the program's inception, EdChoice students have been required to take all state exams, with results reported to the state. Although not part of the original EdChoice legislation, a provision in HB 1 (enacted July 2009) added a requirement for the state to publicly report proficiency rates disaggregated by voucher students' district of residence, by their private school of attendance, and by certain subgroups. These testing and transparency requirements remain in current state law.

According to the Fordham Institute's *School Choice Regulations: Red Tape or Red Herring?* (David Stuit and Sy Doan, January 2013), 39 percent of Ohio's private schools participated in the EdChoice program in 2009–10. Nonparticipation can be partly explained by the fact that many private schools are not located in the geographic vicinity of EdChoice-eligible students, as low-performing public schools are located primarily in the state's impoverished urban areas. Other nonparticipating private schools may be at capacity, while others may have elected not to accept voucher-bearing pupils.

3. Who attends private schools under the EdChoice program?

All students assigned to public schools that meet the performance criteria for EdChoice scholarships are categorically eligible to attend a private school under the program, but it is not obvious which students will be most likely to make use of a voucher. On the one hand, there exist examples from other states that suggest that relatively low-achieving students are more likely to use vouchers that are targeted at disadvantaged students, but there are also examples in which the nature of the selection is modestly positive.⁵ On the other hand, there exists little evidence about the nature of selection in voucher systems that are based on the performance of schools rather than the family background of the student. It could be the case that the same factors that lead disadvantaged families to choose private schools under means-tested vouchers might be at play when voucher eligibility is linked to measured school performance, and given the correlation between average family advantage and measured school quality in Ohio, one might expect the voucher users to be disproportionately disadvantaged or low performing in the EdChoice context, as well. At the same time, it could be the case that relatively motivated families eligible for the voucher may be the group most likely to capitalize on the opportunity. Furthermore, unlike in the Florida context, where families can obtain a voucher before obtaining admission to a private school, in the EdChoice context families must obtain admission to a private school before they are able to seek a voucher.⁶ These factors may make it more likely that higher-performing eligible students will be the voucher users in the Ohio context.⁷

In order to investigate this question, we measure the attributes of students moving to private schools under the EdChoice scholarship program versus those who were eligible to move but remained in the public schools. In order to obtain measures of student attributes, we are limited to students who have already spent at least a year in the public schools (and, in the case where we are looking at prior test scores as a measure of student selection, the students had to have been in public schools through at least third grade to be considered); therefore, we cannot describe the nature of selection for students who enter private schools under the voucher program in Kindergarten. As a consequence, we are limited principally to students who are changing schools at a nontraditional time (for example, not as Kindergarteners entering elementary school or as sixth graders entering middle school). This comparison is likely to favor those families motivated to change schools even when they do not have to do so.

With that proviso, we compare the attributes of students who chose a private school under the EdChoice program in each year to those who were eligible to do so but remained in the public schools. We make these comparisons along a number of lines: their most recent reading and mathematics test scores, whether the student has ever been observed as economically disadvantaged in school records, the student's gender, and the student's race.

We begin by comparing the test scores of students who transitioned to private schools under EdChoice to eligible students who remained in the public schools. In the figures below, reading and mathematics scores are standardized statewide in every year and every grade, and it is apparent that test scores for voucher-eligible students are much lower than the state average—an unsurprising fact, given that school-quality measures are based in large part on the test performance of students who would become eligible for a voucher. As can be seen in the figures, those students who move to private schools have, on average, considerably higher performance levels than those eligible students who remain in public schools. The observed gap between those who transitioned to private schools and those who remained is about half of the black-white test-score gap⁸—quite a large difference in prior performance. It does appear that in the most recent years of observation, the prior test-score gap between those who moved to private schools and those who remained in public schools shrank modestly, because the students who entered the EdChoice program in more recent years were not as far ahead of those who remained in the public schools as they were in the earlier years of the program. Nonetheless, the gap has remained large in recent years, as well.

Figure 1: Prior year standardized mathematics test score: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program participation

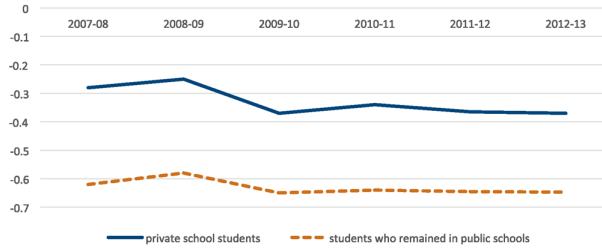
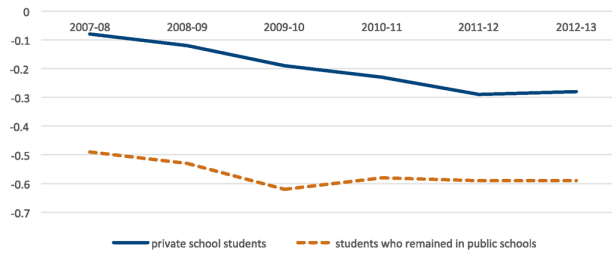


Figure 2: Prior year standardized reading test score: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program participation



The preceding figures are based on those students observed moving to private schools in any given year compared to all eligible students who remained in the public schools regardless of how many years that they had the opportunity to change schools. Next, we perform the same analysis for students who made the choice to stay in public schools or left for private schools in their very first year of voucher eligibility. As can be seen in the figures below, the differences between movers and stayers in the public sector are similar regardless of whether we limit them to their first year of voucher eligibility or perform the comparison regardless of voucher eligibility.

Figure 3: Prior year standardized mathematics score: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of eligibility

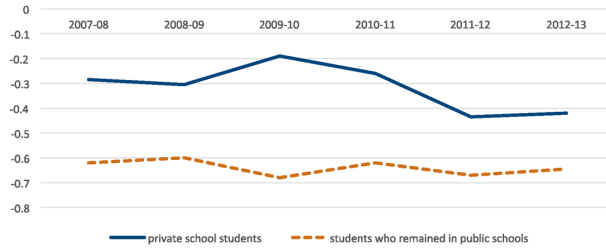
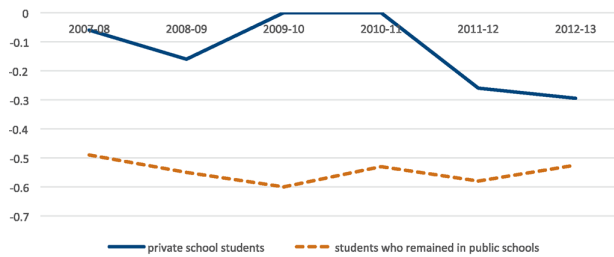


Figure 4: Prior year standardized reading score: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of eligibility



We observe similar patterns with regard to economic disadvantage. The overwhelming majority of students eligible for a voucher have been economically disadvantaged in the past. However, although around 95 percent of voucher-eligible students who remained in public schools have had a history of economic disadvantage,⁹ the comparable figure tends to be around 85 percent for those who moved to a private school on an EdChoice scholarship. This gap, nevertheless, has been closing over time, and the narrowing of the gap in prior economic disadvantage is particularly pronounced in the case of first-time voucher-eligible students. At the same time, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of students eligible for EdChoice scholarships, whether or not they make use of the vouchers, are economically disadvantaged, so we are comparing one very disadvantaged group to another very disadvantaged group.

Figure 5: Share of students ever economically disadvantaged: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program participation

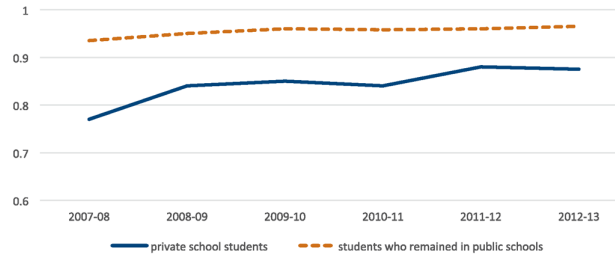
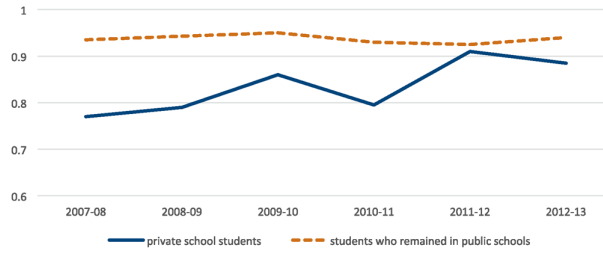


Figure 6: Share of students ever economically disadvantaged: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program eligibility



We also compare private school movers to those remaining in the public school based on student gender. As can be seen in the figures below, female voucher-eligible students are more likely to move to private schools when given the opportunity under the EdChoice program than are male voucher-eligible students, perhaps because female students tend to be more educationally successful than male students, especially those from low-income and minority families, in Ohio and throughout the United States and industrialized nations.¹⁰

Figure 7: Share female students: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program participation

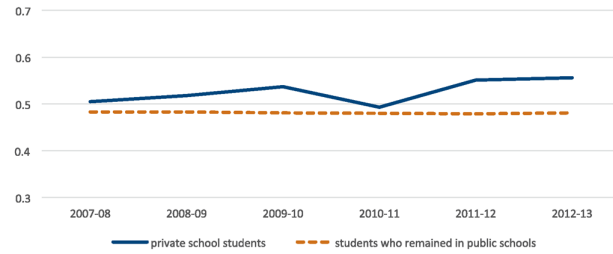
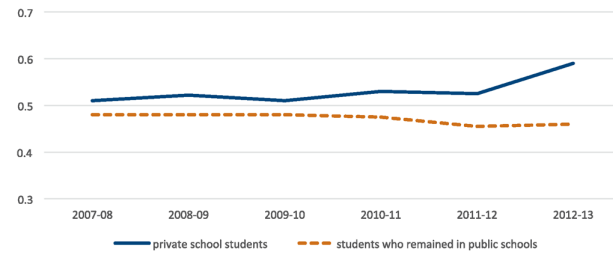


Figure 8: Share female students: EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program eligibility



Finally, we compare the racial and ethnic composition of voucher-eligible students who moved to private schools to those who remained in the public sector. The majority of EdChoice-eligible students are black, and we observe that the rate of private school attendance for black students is approximately proportionate to the black population. On the other hand, there is a difference between Hispanic and white student participation: we observe that private school movers are somewhat more likely to be Hispanic and somewhat less likely to be white than are eligible students who remain in the public schools, especially in the more recent years. Interestingly, this gap is driven primarily by students who have been eligible for multiple years rather than first-time eligible students, as there are no appreciable racial or ethnic differences in selection rates of first-time eligible students. These patterns suggest that Hispanic families may have required more time to act on their eligibility, perhaps because of language difficulties that hamper knowledge about eligibility or other aspects of the school-choice process or perhaps because of differences in school advising networks. These explanations, of course, are only speculative.

Figure 9: Racial/ethnic composition of EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program participation

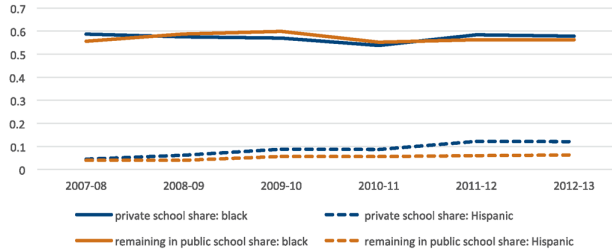
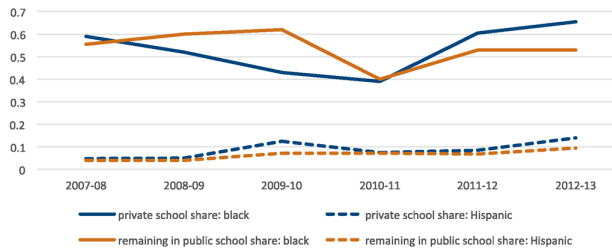


Figure 10: Racial/ethnic composition of EdChoice participants versus eligible nonparticipants, first year of program eligibility



In summary, it appears that comparatively high-achieving and comparatively well-off families (keeping in mind that the overwhelming majority of those participating in the program are still low income) are the groups more likely to use an EdChoice voucher to attend private school when offered the opportunity. There exist some racial and ethnic differences and some differences by gender, but these are relatively small in comparison to those seen regarding economic disadvantage and prior test performance. The fact that these gaps are considerably larger than those typically seen in other locations with voucher programs may suggest that there are specific features of the ways in which the EdChoice program is designed and implemented that make it more difficult for struggling students and comparatively disadvantaged families to make use of the voucher. Allowing schools to use their admissions standards almost certainly affects selection by achievement, both directly and indirectly through its attraction of comparatively motivated families.¹¹ Future work that investigates selection following the program's eligibility expansion in 2013-14 to include all economically disadvantaged students (beginning with Kindergarteners in 2013-14 and expanding one grade at a time in subsequent years) will help policymakers and analysts to understand the degree to which the means-tested channel for voucher receipt makes selection in Ohio more similar to that observed in Florida and other means-tested voucher locales.

4. Overall ‘competitive effects’ of EdChoice on public school students

Next, we turn to the question of whether the EdChoice program has affected student performance in reading and mathematics. We are interested both in the effects of program participation on the participants themselves (which we will study directly in section 5 of this report) as well as on the students who remain in the public schools.

There are numerous reasons to believe that the EdChoice program would affect performance of students in the public schools. One potential effect might come through changes in the **composition** of the student body in the affected public schools. We observed in section 3 of this report that the EdChoice program disproportionately attracted relatively high-performing students (albeit, as they are eligible for the vouchers, from a distinctly disadvantaged population) to the private schools, so the student body remaining in the public schools is somewhat lower achieving, on average, as a consequence of the program. If students benefit from higher-achieving peers, either directly or indirectly, this could lead to reduced performance in the public schools as a consequence of the EdChoice program. Of course, it’s also possible that the direction of peer effects is different, at which point the composition effect of the EdChoice program would be different. Another potential effect of the EdChoice program could come through increased **competition** for students as a result of the voucher option. Other studies¹³ have demonstrated that school vouchers can potentially lead to positive effects on public schools through this channel, so it is possible that Ohio public schools would also improve as a consequence of voucher competition. The introduction of school vouchers as an augmentation to school ratings could also increase the **salience** of the school ratings and induce performance improvements for schools that were previously rated poorly. Other studies¹⁴ have found that introducing choice threats into school-accountability regimes has the potential to improve outcomes by more than the accountability systems alone, though these findings are not universal.¹⁴ In summary, there are reasons to believe that the EdChoice program might either improve or reduce the performance of students attending affected public schools and that these effects depend on the nature and magnitudes of a variety of factors.

Two previous studies have investigated various aspects of the effects of the EdChoice program on traditional public schools. Greg Forster (*Promising Start: An Empirical Analysis of How EdChoice Vouchers Affect Ohio Public Schools*, August 2008) followed school-level cohorts of students from one grade in 2005–06 to the next in 2006–07 and found that for some grade transitions, schools where students were voucher eligible performed better than other schools.¹⁵ Matthew Carr (“The Impact of Ohio’s EdChoice on Traditional Public School Performance,” *Cato Journal*, Spring/Summer 2011) carried out school-level analyses and found that schools where students became voucher eligible improved in terms of aggregate reading and mathematics scores following the introduction of the EdChoice program. In both the Forster and Carr studies, the authors provided evidence that their results were not due to “regression to the mean,” a phenomenon that one might expect given that the schools subject to competitive pressure through the EdChoice program had low performance levels in the time prior to the introduction of the voucher program.

Though the existing studies of the effects of the EdChoice program on public schools provide much valuable information, there are opportunities to improve upon the existing research along two important dimensions. First of all, with the use of **student-level individual data**, it is possible for the first time to fully take into account the fact that school composition changes over time and, in fact, might be directly affected by the introduction of the voucher program. When we make use of student-level data, it is possible to follow an individual student’s progress over time in a manner that is not possible with school-level data when researchers are forced to compare groups of students with different compositions. Second, and even more importantly, we make use of a **regression-discontinuity research design** that allows for much more of an apples-to-apples comparison than has been utilized in the extant literature on the EdChoice program. In essence, we will be able to compare schools that just barely became voucher eligible to schools that just barely missed becoming voucher eligible. Although this means that we are necessarily focusing our attention on a certain set of schools—those on the margin of becoming voucher eligible, rather than schools that were very far from the eligibility threshold—

the benefit of this research design is that we are able to study the effects of the EdChoice program using a comparison set of schools that are extremely similar to those that were directly affected by the program.

The biggest challenge to determining the effects of the EdChoice program on performance is that schools whose students become voucher eligible are systematically different from those whose students do not. This is, of course, by design: the Ohio Department of Education assigns school ratings based on average performance, and only schools with relatively poor performance are affected directly by the EdChoice program. As a consequence, merely comparing schools in which students become eligible for vouchers to those that did not—even if making a before-versus-after comparison—is unlikely to produce an apples-to-apples comparison.

Our solution, as mentioned above, is to implement a regression-discontinuity design. The benefit of a regression-discontinuity approach is that we can compare schools whose students just barely became voucher eligible to those schools whose students just barely missed voucher eligibility. The idea here is that these two sets of schools are going to be extremely close in terms of attributes, both observed and unobserved, so a comparison is more likely to be truly apples to apples. Our preferred regression-discontinuity analysis is for the second year of the program—students who would first become voucher eligible (or not) in the 2007–08 academic year. The rationale here is that in this second year of the program, the rules were such that it became much more difficult to predict exactly which schools' students would become voucher eligible and which schools' students would just barely miss the eligibility category, because the rule change made it so that schools under academic emergency or academic watch in at least two out the three years preceding the academic year in which the determination was made would become voucher eligible. Put differently, eligibility for vouchers in 2007–08 was based on a school's second-best performance between the three academic years of 2003–04, 2004–05, and 2005–06. Furthermore, because the program rules changed dramatically in the Fall 2006, making many more schools eligible for future rounds of vouchers, many schools that were "untreated" in 2006–07 essentially became partially "treated" by the threat of vouchers in the 2006–07 academic year. Therefore, we strongly believe that the second round of voucher eligibility, during which students could attend private schools for the first time in 2007–08, is by far the cleanest for causal-inference purposes.¹⁴ (For completeness, we report some results from a considerably more flawed study of the first round of EdChoice program implementation in an appendix, but we strongly prefer the second-round implementation for the purposes of causal inference and encourage the reader to give the results based on the second round of implementation considerably more credence than those based on the first round of implementation.) Importantly, to the degree to which schools that just missed the threshold (on the positive side)—especially after the EdChoice policy was announced—might have been motivated to improve their performance, our estimates of competitive effects are underestimates of the true competitive effect of the EdChoice program.

A regression-discontinuity design requires that the researcher order all of the schools along some continuous "running variable"—the variable that determines whether or not an individual receives one treatment or another. Because the primary determinant of whether a school is designated as being under academic emergency or watch is that school's state-assigned performance index (PI)¹⁵, our running variable is the second-best performance index received in the 2003–04, 2004–05, or 2005–06 academic year. This empirical approach only works for the set of schools not already eligible for vouchers in the initial 2006–07 academic year. Therefore, we exclude the initial ninety-nine schools eligible for vouchers in 2006–07 when carrying out this analysis.¹⁶

Our outcome of interest is either the student's test score in 2007–08, the first year that the students in question are eligible for a voucher, or in 2008–09, the second year of voucher eligibility. We are interested in both of these outcome years to see whether there is any change over time in the effects of the program between the first and second years of eligibility. Because the students attending different schools are fundamentally different, we measure our outcomes as the change in a student's standardized test scores (measured statewide with mean zero and standard deviation one) between 2005–06 and either 2007–08 (year one) or 2008–09 (year two). We identify 2005–06 as the baseline year of interest because this is the last year of outcomes prior to the introduction of the voucher program; 2006–07 test scores may plausibly be affected

by the introduction of the program. We assign students to schools for the purposes of voucher eligibility based on the schools they attended during the 2005–06 academic year, before the program was implemented. Therefore, for example, an estimated effect of 0.05 would mean that a student enrolled in 2005–06 in a school that would become voucher eligible in 2007–08¹⁹ experienced 5 percent of one standard deviation better test scores, relative to their score in 2005–06, than would have been the case absent voucher eligibility. In our analysis, we consider 419,047 students with observed reading test-score growth between 2005–06 and 2007–08 and 418,749 students with observed mathematics test-score growth. When we add a second year of post-eligibility data (2008–09 scores), our analysis population necessarily declines considerably, to 300,270 (299,874) students in reading (mathematics). In most of the analyses that follow, we combine all voucher-eligible students together, regardless of whether they use the vouchers to attend private school or remain in the public school.²⁰

We employ both graphical analyses and linear-regression analyses to present estimates of the EdChoice program effect on test scores. Because the results of regression-discontinuity analyses are often sensitive to the specific assumptions that a researcher employs, we present several variations on a theme for each type of analysis. This is especially important in cases like this EdChoice evaluation, because the running variable of the second-best PI is strong but does not perfectly predict voucher eligibility, as there are some idiosyncratic mechanisms through which schools with a second-best PI below eighty points can avoid voucher eligibility. In evaluation parlance, we refer to this type of situation as a “fuzzy” regression discontinuity. We deal with this fuzziness in a couple of different ways. In some analyses, we include all schools (except for the ninety-nine schools already eligible for vouchers in 2006–07) and assume that if the second-best performance index is below eighty points, the cutoff for academic-watch versus continuous-improvement status, the school becomes voucher eligible. In other analyses, we introduce a donut-hole approach in which we exclude entirely from the analysis all schools that have a second-best performance index either between 77 and 79.999 or between 75 and 79.999; we do this to reduce the number of schools that we call voucher eligible based on the second-best performance index when they are truly not voucher eligible due to exceptions. There exists a tradeoff in making this exclusion: the larger the donut hole, the more likely that schools just below the threshold are actually voucher eligible, but the larger the donut hole, the less likely the schools that are just below the donut hole are very similar to the schools that are just above the donut hole. We also lose 3.2 percent of all observations when we drop schools with second-best performance indices between 77 and 79.999, and we lose 5.1 percent of all observations when we drop performance indices between 75 and 79.999. Therefore, we present three different donut-hole variations to gauge the sensitivity of the results to this assumption.

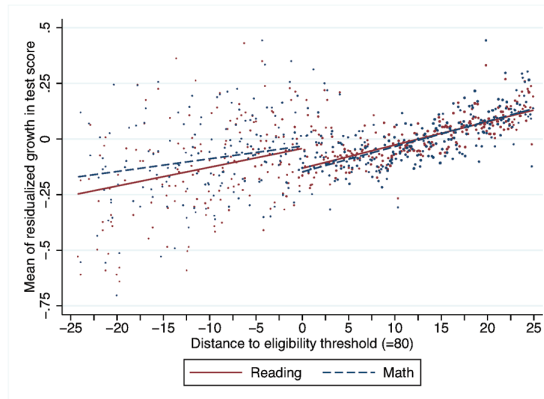
Second, for our regression analyses, we investigate the degree to which the estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility are affected by (1) controlling for a variety of student background characteristics (namely, sex, race and ethnicity, and economic-disadvantage status); (2) allowing the relationship between test-score outcomes and the second-best performance index to differ depending on whether the school is above or below the relevant threshold; or (3) both.

4.1. Graphical analysis

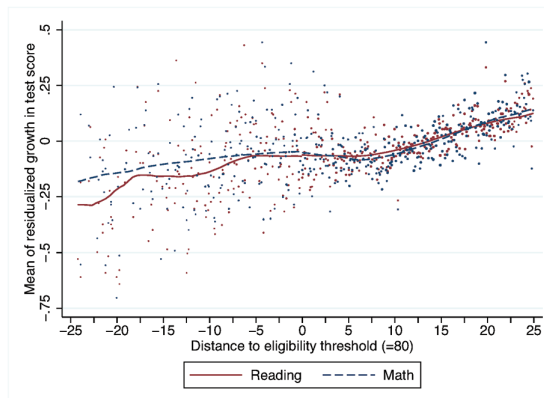
We begin with a set of graphical analyses of student-level test-score growth between 2005–06 and 2007–08. We present the graphical analyses in two ways: a linear analysis and a local-polynomial analysis. The linear analysis makes more use of the full range of schools, regardless of proximity to the threshold, while the local-polynomial analysis heavily weights the schools very close to the threshold. Each point in the graphs below is a separate value of a second-best performance index; if more than one school has exactly the same second-best performance index, we average those schools together in the graphs for ease of presentation.²¹ The red lines represent reading scores, while the dashed blue lines represent mathematics scores. The estimated effect of EdChoice eligibility is the difference between the line to the left of the zero threshold and the line to the right of the zero threshold. As can be seen in the figures below, whether there appears to be a positive benefit

of EdChoice or a zero benefit depends on the assumption about whether the linear-fit analysis or the local-polynomial analysis is more appropriate.

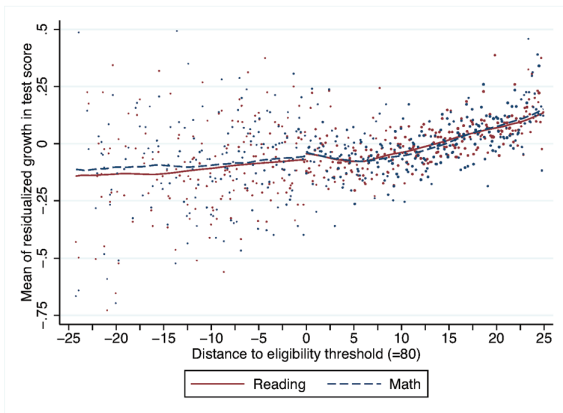
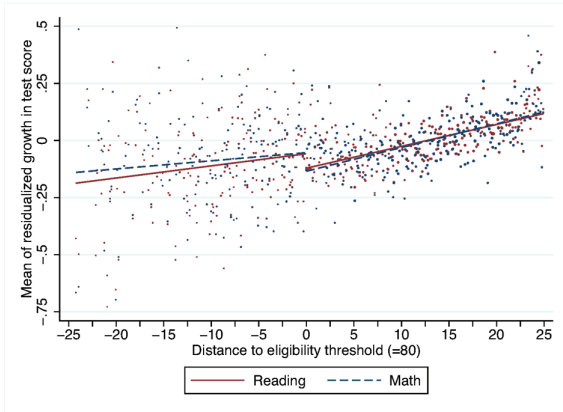
In the case of the linear fit, there is an apparent improvement in test-score growth for voucher-eligible students:



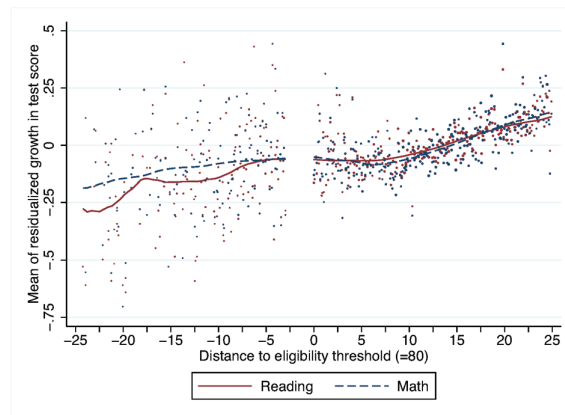
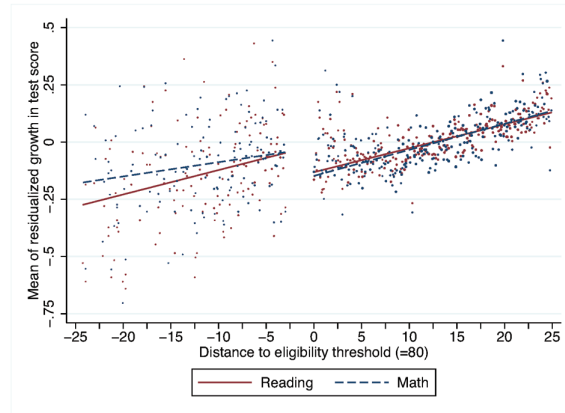
On the other hand, in the case of the local-polynomial analysis, there is no apparent jump at the zero threshold point:



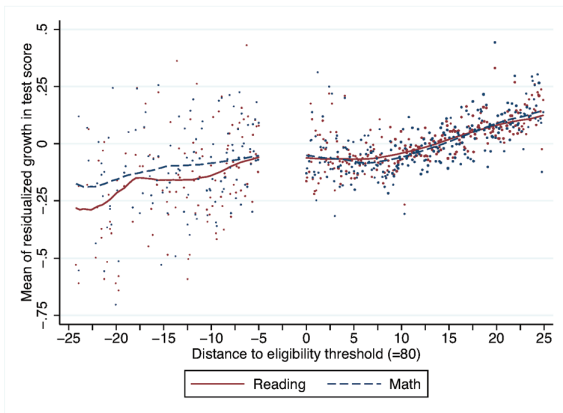
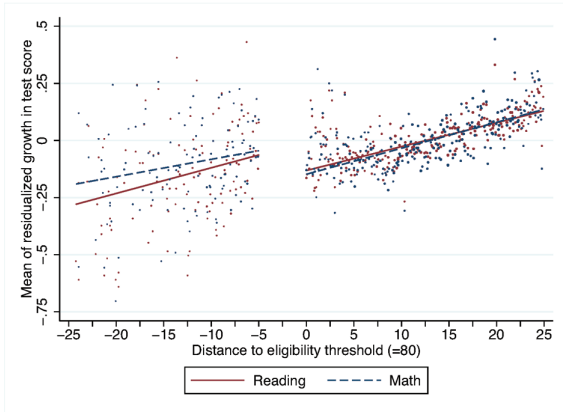
The same pattern of findings is apparent if we investigate test-score growth between 2005–06 and 2008–09. There is a clear positive estimate of EdChoice eligibility in the linear-fit case but a zero estimate in the local-polynomial case:



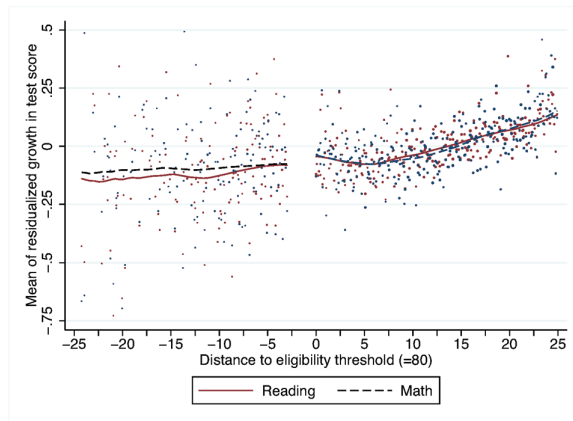
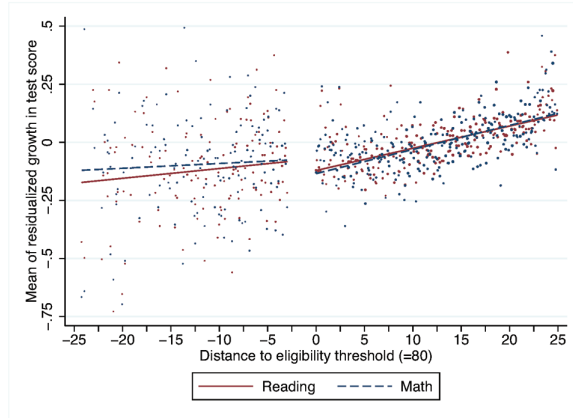
The same patterns—positive estimates for the linear-fit analysis and zero estimates for the local-polynomial analysis—are apparent regardless of the donut hole chosen or regardless of whether we look at growth between 2005–06 and 2007–08 or between 2005–06 and 2008–09. For instance, the following are the figures seen for the donut hole dropping performance indices 77 to 80, for the case of growth between 2005–06 and 2007–08:



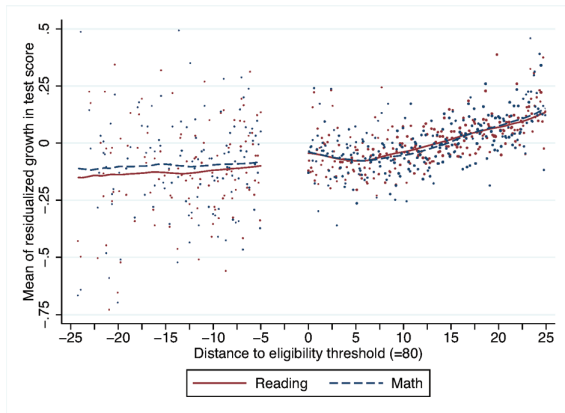
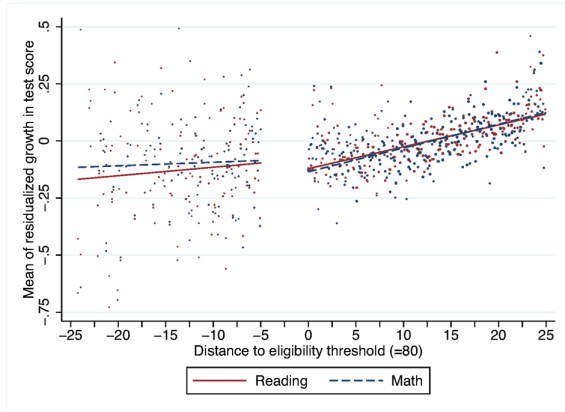
The following are the figures seen for the donut hole dropping performance indices 75 to 80, for the case of growth between 2005-06 and 2007-08:



Likewise, the following are the figures seen for the donut hole dropping performance indices 77 to 80, for the case of growth between 2005-06 and 2008-09:



The following are the figures seen for the donut hole dropping performance indices 75 to 80, for the case of growth between 2005-06 and 2008-09:



In summary, the graphical analyses indicate that the effects of EdChoice on student performance for voucher-eligible students are not negative but are either zero or positive depending on the specific assumptions made regarding the fit of the empirical model. The empirical models that make use of a wider range of data to estimate the underlying relationship between the performance index and student performance tend to show positive results, while those that emphasize the data points extremely close to the threshold for voucher eligibility are more likely to suggest a result closer to zero (but not negative). The following subsection provides additional evidence that might help to serve as a “tiebreaker” between the solidly positive estimated effects of the EdChoice program and those that are closer to zero in magnitude.

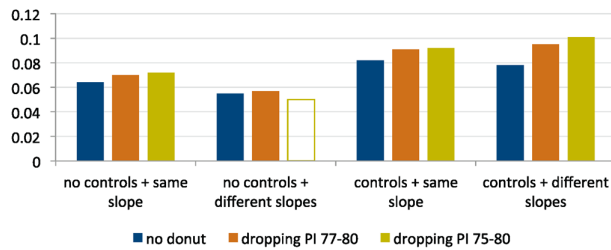
4.2. Linear-regression analysis

We next turn to linear-regression analyses that are analogous to the graphical analyses presented above. As before, we concentrate on the schools that became eligible in the second round of EdChoice eligibility—that is, with students able to attend private schools for the first time in 2007–08 and excluding the ninety-nine schools whose students became eligible in the 2006–07 round that is less well suited to this analysis.

In the discussion that follows, we consider a number of variations to discern the degree to which the results are sensitive to particular assumptions. We begin by presenting the estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on students’ reading and mathematics growth between 2005–06 and 2007–08 for twelve different specifications.²² Specifically, for each outcome, we conduct four analyses apiece with no donut hole around the eligibility threshold, dropping schools with the second-best PI between 77 and 80 and dropping schools with the second-best PI between 75 and 80. For each of these cases, we present analyses where (1) we include no control variables and force the relationship between PI and test-score growth to be the same on both sides of the threshold (same slope); (2) we include no controls but allow the relationship to be different above versus below the threshold (different slopes); (3) we include controls for grade in 2005–06, sex, race and ethnicity, and economic disadvantage but impose the same-slope assumption; and (4) we include controls and also allow the different-slopes assumption. All regression models include a control for the running variable—the difference between the second-best PI and the eligibility threshold of 80. Also, because the treatment is a school-level treatment, we adjust the standard errors for clustering at the level of the school the student attended in 2005–06; doing so leads to larger standard errors and a steeper but more appropriate test for discerning the degree of statistical significance than would occur without adjusting the standard errors. In the text of this report, we present the estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on test-score growth in graphical form; appendix table 1 presents the same results in a statistical tabular form.

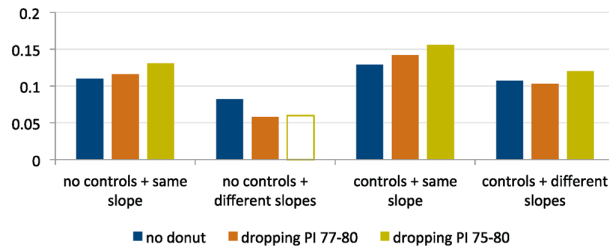
The following figure shows that the estimated effect of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth is invariably positive and statistically distinct from zero at conventional levels in eleven of twelve specifications:²³

Figure 11: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08



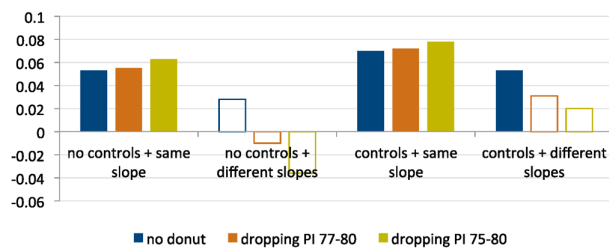
A similar pattern is apparent with regard to mathematics:

Figure 12: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2005-06 to 2007-08



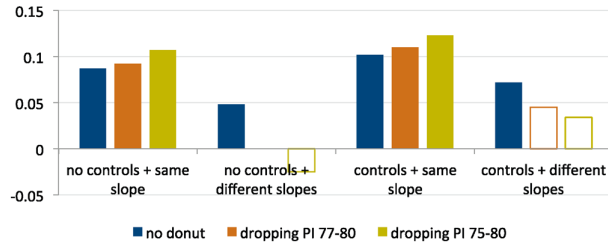
The results are not as universally strong when we consider reading growth between 2005-06 and 2008-09 but are still disproportionately positive and statistically distinct from zero, though more dependent on model specification. The assumption of same versus different slopes of the relationship between the PI and test-score growth is more consequential in this case than with growth through 2007-08:

Figure 13: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2005-06 to 2008-09



As before, a similar pattern emerges with mathematics, as well:

Figure 14: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2005–06 to 2008–09



The overwhelming majority of voucher-eligible students remain in the public schools after eligibility (this is especially the case because these analyses require that a student have a test score observed in 2005–06), but the analyses presented above include both eligible students remaining in public schools and those going to private schools on an EdChoice voucher. Therefore, we repeat the above analyses, restricting our attention only to those eligible students remaining in public schools:

Figure 15: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08 (public only)

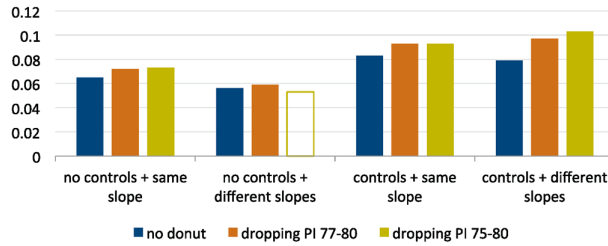


Figure 16: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08 (public only)

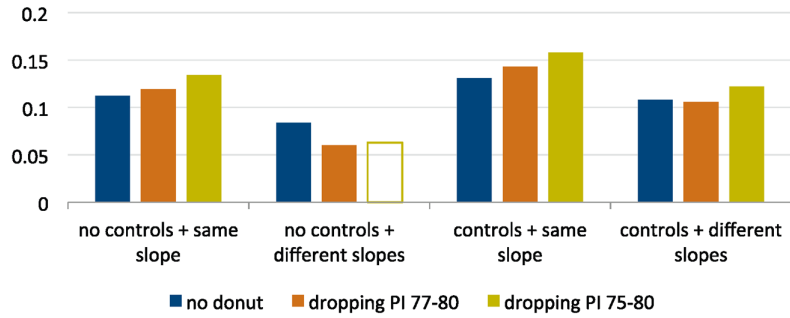


Figure 17: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2005–06 to 2008–09 (public only)

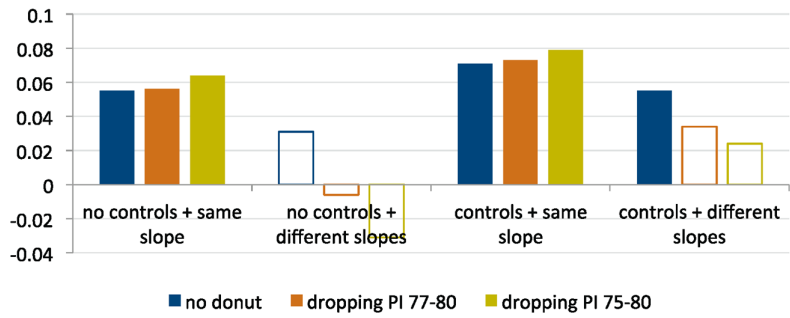
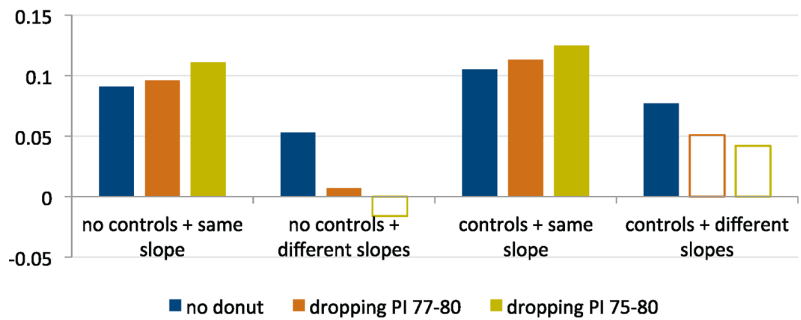


Figure 18: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2005–06 to 2008–09 (public only)

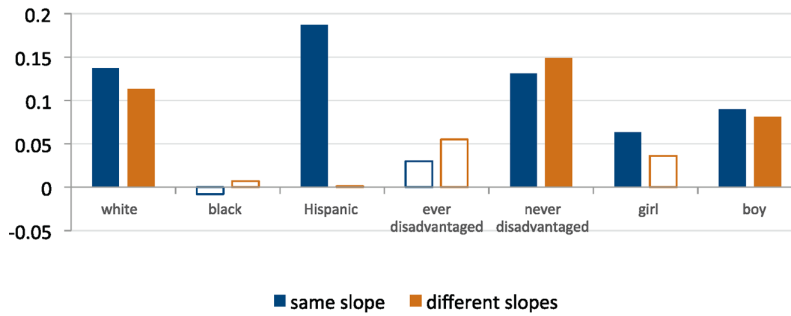


As is apparent from these graphs, the results are extraordinarily similar to those presented for all eligible students. These results are presented in tabular form as well in appendix table 2.

Next, we consider whether the performance increases associated with EdChoice eligibility are similar across a variety of groups. Because the above-mentioned analysis makes clear that the results are quite similar regardless of whether we include a donut hole (or regardless of the size of the donut hole considered), as well as whether or not we control for student background variables, for ease of explication from this point onward all specifications that we estimate include (1) no donut hole and (2) controls for grade in 2005–06, sex, race and ethnicity, and economic disadvantage. Because the results often appreciably vary depending on whether or not we allow the underlying relationship between the PI and test-score growth to vary depending on which side of the threshold a school is located, we continue to report two sets of findings: those where the slope of the relationship between the PI and test-score growth is constrained to be the same and those where the slopes are allowed to vary.²⁴ We consider seven different subgroups: three racial and ethnic groups (white, black, and Hispanic), ever disadvantaged versus never disadvantaged, and girls versus boys. In the body of the report, we limit the discussion to growth between 2005–06 and 2007–08, but in appendix table 3 we present the statistical tabular version of not only the graphs discussed below but also for the specifications based on growth between 2005–06 and 2008–09.

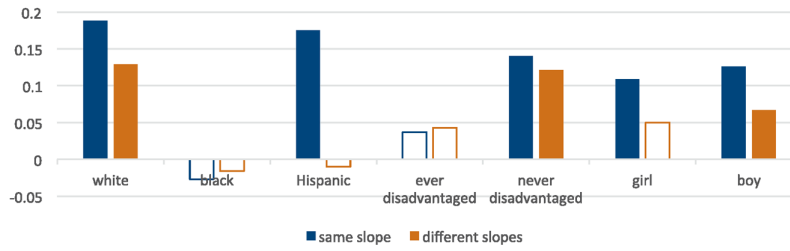
Although we never observe a statistically significant negative estimated effect of EdChoice eligibility for any subgroup, it appears that the positive benefits are disproportionately concentrated among white students and relatively advantaged students and are modestly stronger for boys than for girls. In addition, in some specifications, there is a large positive estimated effect for Hispanic students, but this effect is more sensitive to model specification. The results for reading growth are as follows:

Figure 19: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08, by subgroup



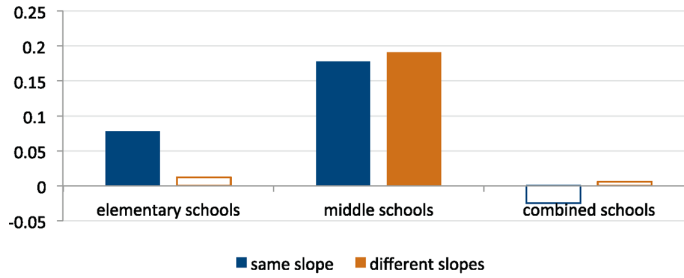
The estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility look very similar if instead we focus on mathematics growth:

Figure 20: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08, by subgroup



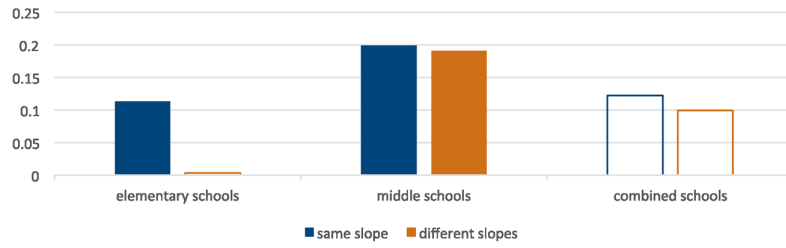
We also stratify the schools by elementary only, middle only, and combined elementary-middle schools.²⁵ The results, also reported in tabular form in appendix table 4, indicate that the positive effects of EdChoice eligibility are particularly concentrated among middle schools:

Figure 21: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08, by school type



The pattern of results appears similar for mathematics and for reading, though the mathematics results are much more pronounced (though still statistically indistinguishable from zero at conventional levels, given the small number of relevant schools) for combined schools:

Figure 22: Estimated effects of EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2005–06 to 2007–08, by school type



5. Effects of EdChoice participation on private school attendees

We have found that, on average, EdChoice eligibility appears to have benefited students (though, as mentioned in the previous section, whether we find a positive or zero estimated effect depends to some degree on the assumptions we make). However, although the empirical approach implemented in section 4 can help to identify the effects of EdChoice **eligibility**, it cannot help to identify the effects of EdChoice **participation**.

The reason that the regression-discontinuity design is inappropriate to study the effect of program participation is that the random element it exploits (some schools are just barely on one side or the other of the threshold for reasons that cannot be predicted or manipulated) is not relevant for those who actually participate in private schooling as a consequence of the program. Indeed, we've observed in section 3 that EdChoice-eligible students who participate in the program are different along a number of observable dimensions versus EdChoice-eligible students who do not participate in the program, and there's every reason to believe that there would be differences along unobservable dimensions as well, thanks to the factors associated with being motivated to change schools, obtaining admission to private school, and securing a voucher.

The ideal way to identify the effects of EdChoice program participation would be to make use of the random variation associated with a lottery, as a number of voucher evaluations in other locations have been able to do. However, EdChoice vouchers are not allocated via lottery, so this precludes this possibility in the Ohio context. The best that we can do in the EdChoice setting is to attempt to match EdChoice participants as closely as possible to nonparticipants in order to follow two observationally similar groups of students through their different settings for the sake of comparison.²⁶

Specifically, we carry out a **propensity score matching** (PSM) approach in order to approximate as closely as possible the apples-to-apples comparison that would have been possible with random assignment.²⁷ The idea behind this approach is to find the nonparticipating students who are most similar along observable dimensions to the program participants. In many applications of PSM models, researchers are forced to identify these control students from the set of people who were eligible but for some reason did not participate. Such a practice can be troublesome because we have no way of knowing whether the people who chose to participate (and were admitted to a private school) and the selected people who did not choose to participate are really the same along unobservable lines. Fortunately, in the case of the EdChoice program, we are able to overcome the problems associated with identifying control students from the population of eligible individuals (as is common with PSM approaches) for the same basic reason that adds credibility to the analysis in section 4: because some schools just barely became voucher eligible and other schools barely missed becoming voucher eligible, we can identify potential comparison students who are nearly identical along observable dimensions to program participants but were ineligible to participate because of the school they attended before the EdChoice program was announced. Additionally, because we can identify the nearly identical (on observed performance) schools, we can argue that program participants and the comparison students attended schools that were reasonably similar. In sum, while the PSM approach that we employ is not without its problems,²⁸ we are convinced that it is as close as we can get to approximating random assignment given the EdChoice setting.

Our approach to PSM is to first isolate the schools whose second-best PI was just slightly above the threshold for voucher eligibility. We begin by limiting the comparison schools to those within three points of the eligibility threshold, and then we consider an even more restrictive case in which we limit comparison schools to those within one point of the eligibility threshold. We also consider cases in which we consider only the **treatment** students (that is, those using the EdChoice vouchers) who attended schools within three points of the eligibility threshold.²⁹ The idea here is to find treatment and comparison students who not only look very similar on observable factors but also attended public schools in 2006–07 that were extremely similar, except that the treatment students attended public schools that were voucher eligible and the comparison students attended public schools that were not. We match students by finding, for each EdChoice-voucher user, the comparison

student or students with the closest possible combination of prior-year reading and mathematics scores, student sex, student race and ethnicity, grade in 2006-07, and student history of economic disadvantage. There are several different ways to statistically identify the closest matches. In the tables and figures, we report the results when we match students using logit matching and when we match students using probit matching. Because we need to observe prior test scores in order to carry out a credible match, we can only study a maximum of 445 students who first moved to private schools in 2007-08.³⁰ Because we are focusing on such a narrow band of schools for the purposes of our comparison, the number of observations is necessarily much lower than the total set of EdChoice-participating students.

Although this implementation of the PSM estimator improves the scientific credibility of the estimates, it does so at significant cost to generalizability. Specifically, we can only identify with relative confidence the estimated effects of EdChoice-scholarship participation for those students who had been attending the highest-performing EdChoice-eligible public schools and not those who had been attending lower-performing public schools. It may be the case that those attending the poorest-performing public schools would have had very different performance effects than those attending the relatively well-performing public schools. Therefore, these comparisons may not be generalizable to the full set of public schools. It is certainly possible that children coming from worse-performing public schools to the private schools under the EdChoice program might have had considerably better outcomes; that said, we have no way of credibly investigating this possibility using existing data.

We begin by comparing reading and mathematics scores under a number of different PSM modeling specifications and study not just the first year of a student's attendance in private school (or comparison public school following eligibility), 2007-08, but also the next two years, 2008-09 and 2009-10, as well. The reason we follow students for multiple years is because we want to reduce the likelihood that any estimated effects of private school participation are affected by any short-term changes in test scores associated with school switching. We report both repeated cross-sectional results where the set of students in each year differs depending on how many students remain in tested grades as well as panel results in which we follow the same students (including 205 treated students attending private schools on EdChoice vouchers). We report statistical tabular results in appendix table 5.

Figure 23: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on mathematics test scores, 2007-08 cohort, zero-to-three-point comparison (relative to 2006-07)

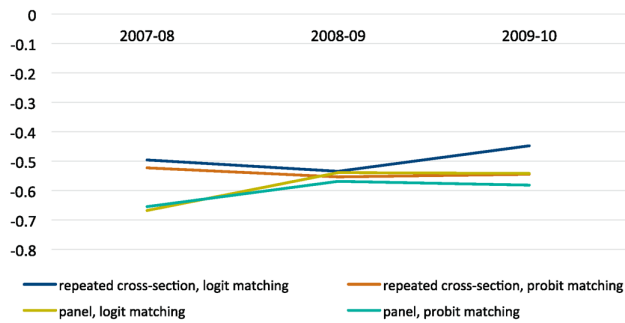
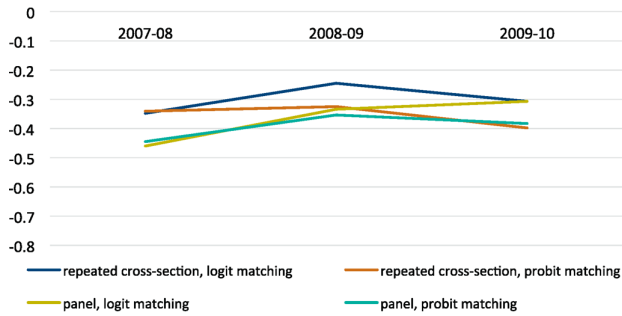


Figure 24: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on reading scores, 2007–08 cohort, zero-to-three-point comparison (relative to 2006–07)



As is apparent from the above graphs, the estimated effects of EdChoice participation on test scores are unambiguously negative across a variety of model specifications, for both reading and mathematics (though more negative for mathematics than for reading). The negative results are present regardless of whether we look at the same students in a panel setting or different sets of students, and they do not appear to change much over time, indicating that the initial negative results are not due to the fact that EdChoice participants all were newcomers in a new private school.

As seen in the following figures and in appendix table 6, the same patterns are clear if we restrict our comparison group to students attending schools within one point of the EdChoice eligibility threshold, as well as when limiting the EdChoice treatment group to schools within three points of the eligibility threshold (though this limits the analysis to just eighty-two treated students in year one and fifty-one treated students by year three).³¹ In this last comparison in reading, the results become small and statistically insignificant in year three—but the overwhelming evidence indicates a substantial negative effect on test scores of attending private schools under an EdChoice voucher for those students who were attending the highest-performing schools amongst those that were eligible for the voucher. We cannot generalize these findings to students who had previously attended much lower-performing public schools because we cannot conceive of a credible way to make that type of comparison.

Figure 25: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on mathematics scores, 2007–08 cohort, different models (relative to 2006–07)

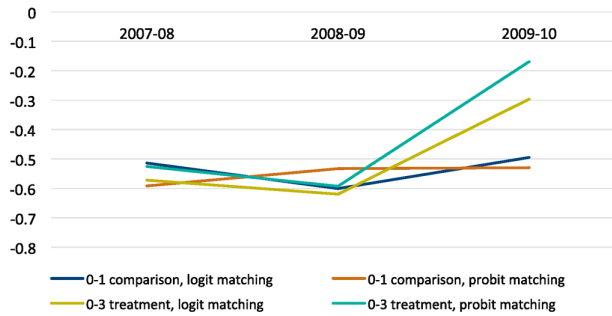
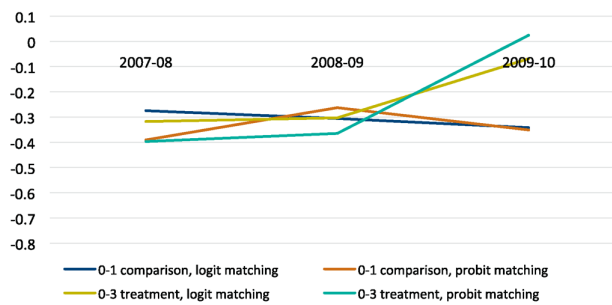


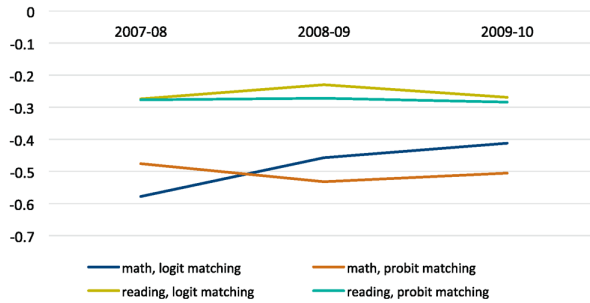
Figure 26: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on reading scores, 2007–08 cohort, different models (relative to 2006–07)



It may, for some reason, still be the case that the negative estimated effects of EdChoice participation are due to multiyear negative consequences of school moves for students who were old enough to have been tested in public schools before they moved. In order to directly address this question, we compare the students who moved to private schools under the EdChoice program to their closest matches among students from comparison schools (here, we choose the schools in the 0–1 comparison category, those schools who just barely missed eligibility for EdChoice vouchers) who also changed schools in 2007–08—but to other public schools rather than to private schools (as, recall, these comparison students were not eligible for a voucher under the EdChoice program). There were 2,576 closely matched public school movers in the comparison schools to compare with the 445 EdChoice participants in the analysis. These comparisons are seen in the

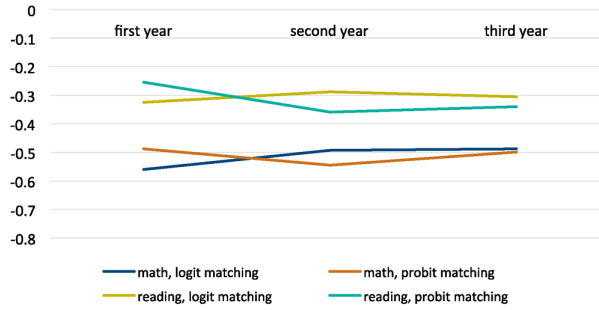
figure below and in appendix table 7. As is evident, the comparisons between EdChoice participants and closely matched public school changers in comparison schools look quite similar to those with all closely matched students in comparison schools. As a consequence, the evidence suggests that the negative findings are not due to the fact that EdChoice participants necessarily changed schools in 2007-08.

Figure 27: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on test scores, comparing participants to public school movers, zero-to-one-point comparison (relative to 2006-07)



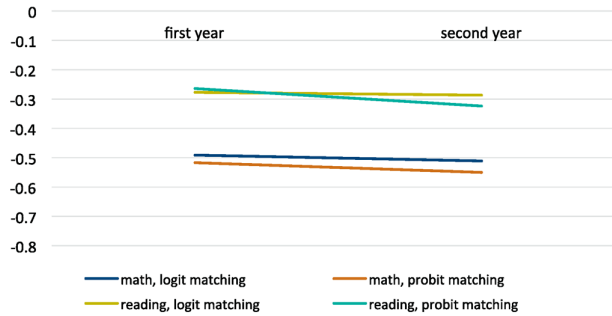
So far, we have concentrated on the students newly eligible in 2007-08. However, we can carry out this analysis to later years as well, given that we observe test-score data through the 2012-13 academic year. In the analysis that follows, we pool all of the EdChoice participants who became newly eligible at any time between 2007-08 and 2010-11 and followed them over the first three years of their participation. (As before, we are presenting the results of the pooled cross-section approach rather than the panel approach, so many of the students in year one are not observed in subsequent years.) In the following figure as well as appendix table 8, we compare these 876 newly eligible EdChoice participants to the 19,776 most closely matched students from schools that were never eligible for EdChoice vouchers but also were in the very close (zero-to-one-point) comparison range. As can be seen, the results that include the more recent EdChoice participants look very similar to those from the 2007-08 new eligibility cohort.

Figure 28: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on test scores, 2007–08 to 2010–11 first-eligible cohorts, zero-to-one-point comparison (relative to 2006–07)



We can go one step further still and limit ourselves to cohorts where we only observe two post-eligibility years, thereby pooling together all newly eligible EdChoice participants entering private schools between 2007–08 and 2011–12 (and, of course, still have test-score histories). This brings in another seventy-four private school students who were first eligible for EdChoice vouchers in 2011–12, along with 3,884 additional public school students in comparison schools. As can be seen in the following figure, as well as in appendix table 9, the patterns of findings continue to present the same story of EdChoice participants faring considerably worse in the private schools than very similar comparison students fared in the public schools.

Figure 29: PSM estimates of effects of EdChoice participation on test scores, 2007–08 to 2011–12 first-eligible cohorts, zero-to-one-point comparison (relative to 2006–07)



These results are certainly not without their caveats. As we mentioned at the beginning of this section, the ideal approach to identify the effects of private school participation under an EdChoice voucher would have been to make use of random assignment generated by a lottery, but that is not an option given the ways in which the EdChoice vouchers are allocated. PSM models are not ideal because there may still be unobserved differences between EdChoice participants and nonparticipants who were very closely matched on the basis of observable factors including prior test scores; however, this is somewhat less of an issue in the PSM approach that we implemented because we are not comparing people who made the choice to participate versus people who made the choice not to participate, as is very often the case with PSM approaches. In our implementation of PSM, we are comparing people who made the choice to participate versus people who had no choice regarding participation but who have similar observable attributes, which lends some additional credibility to the approach—and, of course, in doing so we are only able to focus on public schools that were among the highest performing of the voucher-eligible schools. Therefore, we cannot generalize these findings to those students coming from lower-performing public schools.

Weighing the remarkable consistency of the evidence against the limitations of the PSM approach, our conclusion is that participation in the EdChoice program likely reduced students' reading and mathematics scores relative to what would have occurred in the public sector—for those students who had previously attended the highest performing of the EdChoice-eligible schools. This may be because the students attended lower-quality private schools than the public schools that they left (especially because the public schools likely performed somewhat better as a consequence of the EdChoice program, though the improvement in the public schools is nowhere near as large as the estimated reduction in participants' scores after going to private schools). It may also be that the private schools attended are not necessarily lower quality but are focused on different sets of skills and competencies, or it may be that the private schools attended under the EdChoice program may not have emphasized the state assessments to the degree to which the public schools did. Although Ohio state law has required the public reporting of private school average test scores for students participating in the EdChoice program since 2009–10, it is still almost surely the case that participating private schools did not have curricula as well aligned to the state assessments as did the public schools, and private schools face different degrees of public accountability tied to the state assessments than do public schools. It is clear that there remains a need for a deeper understanding of the factors (such as public-private differences in curriculum alignment, attributes of schools participating in the program, consequences of differences in accountability between public and private schools, potentially different effects for students coming from especially low-performing public schools versus relatively high-performing public schools from which students were voucher-eligible, and so forth) that contribute to the observed differences in student outcomes between public and private schools. Such an evaluation is beyond the scope of this present project.

Though most studies of voucher participation in other settings find positive or zero estimates of participation on student test scores, it is not unheard of to find negative test-score estimates of voucher participation, even estimates that are of similar magnitude to those found in Ohio. Most recently, a lottery study regarding school vouchers in Louisiana by Atila Abdulkadiroglu, Parag Pathak, and Christopher Walters ("School Vouchers and Student Achievement: First-Year Evidence from the Louisiana Scholarship Program," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 21839, December 2015) found consistent evidence of very large negative consequences of voucher participation on student test scores, particularly in mathematics, though a subsequent study by Jonathan Mills and Patrick Wolf (*The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement after Two Years*, University of Arkansas School Choice Demonstration Project, 2016) indicates that year-two results are less negative than those observed in the first year. Abdulkadiroglu and his coauthors conducted a series of analyses to suggest that the schools participating in the program tended to be those that had been rapidly losing enrollment and might have been more likely to recruit voucher students; carrying out a similar analysis in Ohio is beyond the scope of this report but would be a very valuable area for future investigation. Likewise, it is possible that in the Ohio case, systematically different schools admitted Kindergarten entrants, whom we cannot study, versus the schools that admitted entrants in late-elementary or middle grades; this could also be a potential explanation for our findings.

6. Summary

Taken together, the results of this report present a mixed bag of findings regarding the EdChoice voucher program. Although the evidence is not completely unambiguous, the weight of the evidence indicates that EdChoice eligibility improved reading and mathematics outcomes for the students affected. We suspect that this is coming through increased competition for lower-ranked public schools as well as a desire for these schools to improve to avoid losing students to the voucher program; we suspect that the competition is a leading explanation rather than merely avoidance of grading stigma because the regression-discontinuity approaches focusing on the second-best PI are designed to concentrate particularly on the voucher-eligibility component of the system, rather than on the school ratings themselves. We find evidence that the program attracts relatively high-scoring and comparatively advantaged eligible students (though these students are still overwhelmingly low scoring and disadvantaged as a group, relative to the state as a whole) and that this may be due to programmatic rules that require private school admission before voucher application, rather than the reverse, which is seen in other locales such as Florida. And though EdChoice eligibility apparently improves student test scores in general, this is not the case for those who actually use their vouchers to attend private schools, having previously attended relatively high-performing public schools among the EdChoice-eligible schools. Those eligible students (coming from these relatively high-performing public schools) who attend private schools appear to fare considerably worse than we predict that they would have performed had they remained in the public schools. These are averages, of course, and there are some reasons to believe that the private school experiences of EdChoice participants may be better than what we estimate. For instance, private schools participating in the EdChoice program do not face the same high stakes associated with state testing that is aligned to public school curricula but not to any particular private school curriculum. Although since 2009–10, Ohio state law has required the public reporting of average performance of private school students participating in the EdChoice program, there are no formal sanctions or rewards for private schools associated with performance on the state tests. In addition, of course, the experiences of private school students coming from public schools farther away from the threshold of eligibility may have been considerably different from those observed using the methods employed in this report. Nonetheless, this analysis is the best that we were able to do with the information at hand, suggesting that deeper study into the causes of these performance differences—related to differences in school quality, test-curriculum alignment, or other factors—should be a priority.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Analysis of overall effects in the initial 2006–07 eligibility wave

In this report, we focus on the model specification from the second wave of eligibility, rather than the first wave of ninety-nine EdChoice-eligible schools in 2006–07. We strongly prefer the second-wave analysis for two principal reasons. First, the more complicated nature of eligibility—the fact that the second-best school rating determined eligibility, as opposed to the best school rating determining eligibility—makes causal inference more defensible. Second, because the program rules changed dramatically in Fall 2006, making many more schools eligible for future rounds of vouchers, many schools that were “untreated” in 2006–07 essentially became partially “treated” by the threat of vouchers in the 2006–07 academic year. If schools that just missed voucher eligibility in 2006–07 faced additional competitive pressure in 2006–07 as a consequence of the program-rule-change announcement and responded accordingly by improving performance, this would introduce bias against finding a positive estimated effect of EdChoice eligibility in the first round of eligibility.

Nonetheless, for the sake of completeness, and with these provisos, we repeat the regression-discontinuity analysis for the initial 2006–07 wave of eligibility and, again (for the three different donut-hole specifications), present analyses where (1) we include no control variables and force the relationship between PI and test-score growth to be the same on both sides of the threshold (same slope); (2) we include no controls but allow the relationship to be different above versus below the threshold (different slopes); (3) we include controls for grade in 2004–05, sex, race and ethnicity, and economic disadvantage but impose the same-slope assumption; and (4) we include controls and allow the different-slopes assumption. In this set of analyses, we back up the initial test scores to the previous year as well, so we investigate test-score growth between 2004–05 and 2006–07. As can be seen in the figure below (as well as in statistical tabular form in appendix table 10), the results still indicate positive effects of initial-round EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2004–05 to 2006–07, but the level of statistical significance tends to be lower, as are the magnitudes of the estimated findings even when statistically significant. In the case of mathematics, there is no evidence of a systematic relationship, either positive or negative, between initial EdChoice eligibility and test-score growth. Therefore, while there is reason to believe that these results are underestimates of a true effect that is more positive than those presented below (because many of the untreated schools in this analysis were actually treated relatively early in the 2006–07 academic year)—and while we strongly prefer the estimates from the second round of the EdChoice program because we believe those results to be the more scientifically credible—these first-round results suggest that caution is still warranted when concluding that the EdChoice program led to improvements in the schools that became voucher eligible.

Figure A1: Estimated effects of first-round EdChoice eligibility on reading growth from 2004–05 to 2006–07

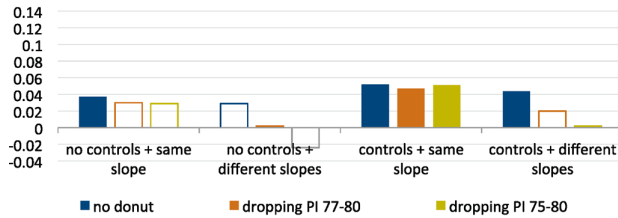
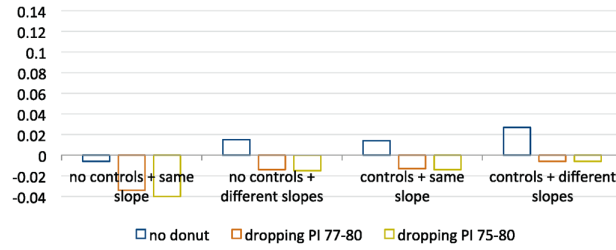


Figure A2: Estimated effects of first-round EdChoice eligibility on mathematics growth from 2004-05 to 2006-07



Taking these less rigorous first-round findings together with the more empirically valid 2007-08 EdChoice round results, our general conclusion is that the EdChoice program likely improved test scores for newly eligible students. Although the results are somewhat sensitive to model specification as well as timing, the preponderance of the evidence supports the notion of positive overall effects of the program.

Appendix 2: Tables

Table A1: Total effects of EdChoice eligibility, focusing on schools first eligible in 2007-08 (and dropping the ninety-nine schools first eligible in 2006-07)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	No dual			Dropping schools with second best PI between 77 and 79,999				Dropping schools with second best PI between 75 and 79,999				
VARIABLES	A1	A2	A3	A4								
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005-06 to 2007-08												
Eligible	0.064*** (0.018)	0.055*** (0.021)	0.082*** (0.018)	0.070*** (0.022)	0.070*** (0.022)	0.057* (0.023)	0.091*** (0.021)	0.066*** (0.031)	0.072*** (0.025)	0.050 (0.047)	0.092*** (0.024)	0.101*** (0.044)
Observations	419,047	419,047	419,047	419,047	405,669	405,669	405,669	405,669	397,891	397,891	397,891	397,891
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005-06 to 2007-08												
Eligible	0.110*** (0.021)	0.082*** (0.025)	0.129*** (0.021)	0.107*** (0.025)	0.116*** (0.024)	0.058* (0.025)	0.142*** (0.024)	0.104*** (0.033)	0.131*** (0.028)	0.060 (0.053)	0.156*** (0.027)	0.120*** (0.048)
Observations	418,749	418,749	418,749	418,749	405,373	405,373	405,373	397,590	397,590	397,590	397,590	397,590
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005-06 to 2008-09												
Eligible	0.053*** (0.020)	0.028 (0.022)	0.070*** (0.019)	0.053** (0.022)	0.055** (0.024)	-0.010 (0.033)	0.072*** (0.022)	0.031 (0.032)	0.063** (0.027)	-0.036 (0.047)	0.078*** (0.026)	0.020 (0.048)
Observations	300,270	300,270	300,270	300,270	290,880	290,880	290,880	290,880	285,438	285,438	285,438	285,438
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005-06 to 2008-09												
Eligible	0.087*** (0.020)	0.048 (0.020)	0.102*** (0.020)	0.072*** (0.023)	0.082*** (0.023)	0.000 (0.037)	0.110*** (0.027)	0.045 (0.035)	0.107*** (0.032)	-0.025 (0.054)	0.123*** (0.031)	0.034 (0.051)
Observations	299,874	299,874	299,874	299,874	290,491	290,491	290,491	290,491	285,069	285,069	285,069	285,069
Different slopes		X		X		X		X		X		X
Controls			X	X			X	X			X	X

Note: Standard errors are clustered at 2005-06 school level. Eligible is defined as below 0 threshold where threshold is PI-80. Controls include female, white-non-Hispanic, Black-non-Hispanic, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and grade dummies. All regressions also include running variable (PI relative to threshold) and interactions with being above or below threshold in the case of different slopes.

Table A2: Total effects of EdChoice eligibility, focusing on schools first eligible in 2007–08 (and dropping the ninety-nine schools first eligible in 2006–07): Public school attendees only

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	No duvet			Dropping schools with second best PI between 77 and 79,999				Dropping schools with second best PI between 75 and 79,999				
	A1	A2	A3	A4								
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005–06 to 2007–08												
Eligible	0.065*** (0.018)	0.056*** (0.021)	0.063*** (0.018)	0.079*** (0.021)	0.072*** (0.022)	0.059** (0.023)	0.093*** (0.021)	0.097*** (0.031)	0.073*** (0.025)	0.053 (0.047)	0.061*** (0.024)	0.103** (0.045)
Observations	418,477	418,477	418,477	418,477	405,179	405,179	405,179	405,179	397,449	397,449	397,449	397,449
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005–06 to 2007–08												
Eligible	0.112*** (0.021)	0.084*** (0.025)	0.131*** (0.021)	0.108*** (0.025)	0.119*** (0.024)	0.060* (0.029)	0.143*** (0.024)	0.106*** (0.034)	0.134*** (0.028)	0.063 (0.053)	0.158*** (0.027)	0.122** (0.059)
Observations	418,179	418,179	418,179	418,179	404,883	404,883	404,883	404,883	397,148	397,148	397,148	397,148
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005–06 to 2008–09												
Eligible	0.055*** (0.023)	0.031 (0.023)	0.071*** (0.019)	0.055** (0.022)	0.056** (0.024)	-0.006 (0.033)	0.073*** (0.023)	0.034 (0.032)	0.064** (0.027)	-0.031 (0.048)	0.079*** (0.029)	0.024 (0.046)
Observations	299,385	299,385	299,385	299,385	290,124	290,124	290,124	290,124	284,748	284,748	284,748	284,748
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005–06 to 2008–09												
Eligible	0.091*** (0.026)	0.053* (0.033)	0.105*** (0.024)	0.077*** (0.029)	0.096*** (0.029)	0.067 (0.037)	0.113*** (0.027)	0.051 (0.035)	0.111*** (0.032)	-0.016 (0.054)	0.125*** (0.031)	0.042 (0.051)
Observations	298,990	298,990	298,990	298,990	289,736	289,736	289,736	289,736	284,371	284,371	284,371	284,371
Different slopes		X		X		X		X		X		X
Controls			X	X			X	X			X	X

Note: Standard errors are clustered at 2005–06 school level. Eligible is defined as below 0 threshold where threshold is PI–80. Controls include female, white-non-Hispanic, Black-non-Hispanic, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and grade dummies. All regressions also include running variable (PI relative to threshold) and interactions with being above or below threshold in the case of different slopes.

Table A3: Heterogeneity in total effects of EdChoice eligibility, by demographic characteristics, focusing on schools first eligible in 2007-08 (and dropping the ninety-nine schools first eligible in 2006-07)

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
	White		Black		Hispanic		Ever disadvantaged		Never disadvantaged		Girl		Boy	
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005-06 to 2007-08														
Eligible	0.137*** (0.023)	0.113*** (0.035)	-0.008 (0.048)	0.007 (0.051)	0.187*** (0.053)	0.001 (0.075)	0.030 (0.022)	0.055 (0.034)	0.131*** (0.031)	0.149*** (0.053)	0.063*** (0.022)	0.036 (0.032)	0.030*** (0.024)	0.081** (0.036)
Observations	335,672	335,672	45,840	45,040	7,486	7,486	204,975	204,975	200,694	200,694	150,299	150,299	207,379	207,379
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005-06 to 2007-08														
Eligible	0.188*** (0.028)	0.129*** (0.038)	-0.027 (0.047)	-0.016 (0.052)	0.175*** (0.062)	-0.010 (0.091)	0.037 (0.026)	0.043 (0.038)	0.140*** (0.038)	0.121** (0.056)	0.108*** (0.026)	0.050 (0.037)	0.126*** (0.025)	0.067* (0.036)
Observations	335,230	335,230	45,829	45,029	7,578	7,578	204,843	204,843	200,530	200,530	150,131	150,131	207,242	207,242
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005-06 to 2008-09														
Eligible	0.097*** (0.028)	0.040 (0.036)	-0.014 (0.043)	-0.029 (0.048)	0.142** (0.062)	-0.011 (0.098)	0.009 (0.024)	-0.007 (0.034)	0.075** (0.031)	0.082 (0.047)	0.033 (0.024)	-0.030 (0.034)	0.089*** (0.028)	0.019 (0.036)
Observations	240,892	240,892	32,537	32,537	5,379	5,379	149,613	149,613	141,267	141,267	142,159	142,159	148,721	148,721
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005-06 to 2008-09														
Eligible	0.149*** (0.031)	0.059 (0.038)	-0.037 (0.051)	-0.049 (0.056)	0.137** (0.070)	-0.053 (0.094)	0.008 (0.028)	-0.012 (0.038)	0.108*** (0.040)	0.025 (0.058)	0.075** (0.033)	-0.012 (0.040)	0.106*** (0.031)	0.014 (0.038)
Observations	240,355	240,355	32,488	32,488	5,441	5,441	149,407	149,407	141,084	141,084	141,978	141,978	148,513	148,513
Different slopes		X		X		X		X		X		X		X

Note: Standard errors are clustered at 2005-06 school level. Eligible is defined as below 0 threshold where threshold is PI-80. Controls include female, white-non-Hispanic, Black-non-Hispanic, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and grade dummies. All regressions also include running variable (PI relative to threshold) and interactions with being above or below threshold in the case of different slopes.

Table A4: Heterogeneity in total effects of EdChoice eligibility, focusing on schools first eligible in 2007–08 (and dropping the ninety-nine schools first eligible in 2006–07), by initial school type

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Elementary school		Middle school		Combined school	
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005–06 to 2007–08						
Eligible	0.076** (0.024)	0.012 (0.037)	0.178** (0.052)	0.191** (0.074)	-0.025 (0.102)	0.006 (0.109)
Observations	312,827	312,827	75,420	75,420	17,422	17,422
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005–06 to 2007–08						
Eligible	0.113** (0.028)	0.003 (0.040)	0.199** (0.060)	0.191* (0.090)	0.122 (0.080)	0.089 (0.090)
Observations	312,555	312,555	75,400	75,400	17,400	17,400
Growth in standardized reading scores from 2005–06 to 2008–09						
Eligible	0.069** (0.025)	-0.040 (0.036)	0.213** (0.087)	0.241* (0.128)	-0.033 (0.115)	-0.021 (0.110)
Observations	264,047	264,047	14,954	14,954	11,879	11,879
Growth in standardized mathematics scores from 2005–06 to 2008–09						
Eligible	0.095** (0.031)	-0.036 (0.041)	0.280** (0.123)	0.146 (0.158)	0.102 (0.105)	0.077 (0.106)
Observations	263,689	263,689	14,954	14,954	11,848	11,848
Different slopes		X		X		X

Note: Standard errors are clustered at 2005–06 school level. Eligible is defined as below 0 threshold where threshold is PI–80. Controls include female, white-non-Hispanic, Black-non-Hispanic, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and grade dummies. All regressions also include running variable (PI relative to threshold) and interactions with being above or below threshold in the case of different slopes. The three most common schools at the elementary level are K–5, K–6, and K–4. The three most common schools at the middle level are 6–8, 5–8, and 4–8. The three most common combined schools are K–8, pre-K–8, and K–7.

Table A5: PSM estimates of the effects of EdChoice participation: Control students attended schools zero to three points above threshold

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Repeated cross-section			Three-year panel		
	2007-08 scores	2008-09 scores	2008-10 scores	2007-08 scores	2008-09 scores	2009-10 scores
Mathematics (logit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.496***	-0.505***	-0.448***	-0.668***	-0.539***	-0.542***
	(0.044)	(0.049)	(0.057)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.071)
Number treated	445	405	301	205	205	205
Observations	19,667	16,403	11,712	11,197	11,197	11,197
Mathematics (probit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.520***	-0.554***	-0.545***	-0.655***	-0.569***	-0.582***
	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.056)	(0.065)	(0.061)	(0.063)
Number treated	445	405	301	205	205	205
Observations	19,667	16,403	11,712	11,197	11,197	11,197
Reading (logit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.346***	-0.245***	-0.307***	-0.460***	-0.334***	-0.307***
	(0.049)	(0.054)	(0.061)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.074)
Number treated	445	405	301	205	205	205
Observations	19,667	16,403	11,712	11,197	11,197	11,197
Reading (probit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.341***	-0.325***	-0.388***	-0.445***	-0.354***	-0.383***
	(0.049)	(0.052)	(0.054)	(0.068)	(0.067)	(0.069)
Number treated	445	405	301	205	205	205
Observations	19,667	16,403	11,712	11,197	11,197	11,197

Table A6: PSM estimates of the effects of EdChoice participation: Investigating different criteria for inclusion into the analysis; repeated cross-section

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Control students attended schools zero to one point above threshold			Control students attended schools zero to three points above threshold; treatment students attended schools zero to three points below threshold		
	2007-08 scores	2008-09 scores	2009-10 scores	2007-08 scores	2008-09 scores	2009-10 scores
Mathematics (logit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.514*** (0.048)	-0.601*** (0.056)	-0.495*** (0.064)	-0.572*** (0.103)	-0.620*** (0.113)	-0.297** (0.143)
Number treated	445	405	301	82	75	51
Observations	7,491	6,023	4,194	19,304	16,073	11,462
Mathematics (probit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.592*** (0.048)	-0.533** (0.052)	-0.530*** (0.063)	-0.526*** (0.083)	-0.593*** (0.111)	-0.103 (0.143)
Number treated	445	405	301	82	75	51
Observations	7,491	6,023	4,194	19,304	16,073	11,462
Reading (logit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.275*** (0.050)	-0.306*** (0.055)	-0.342*** (0.063)	-0.310*** (0.115)	-0.303*** (0.096)	-0.069 (0.143)
Number treated	445	405	301	82	75	51
Observations	7,491	6,023	4,194	19,304	16,073	11,462
Reading (probit matching)						
Private school 2007-08	-0.391*** (0.052)	-0.263*** (0.054)	-0.351*** (0.068)	-0.397*** (0.074)	-0.365** (0.114)	0.024 (0.143)
Number treated	445	405	301	82	75	51
Observations	7,491	6,023	4,194	19,304	16,073	11,462

Table A7: Comparing private school students newly eligible in 2007-08 to those ineligible but changing public schools in 2007-08; PSM estimates of the effects of EdChoice participation, where control students attended schools zero to one point above threshold; repeated cross-section

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Mathematics			Reading		
	2009-10 scores	2010-11 scores	2011-12 scores	2009-10 scores	2010-11 scores	2011-12 scores
Logit matching						
Private school 2007-08	-0.576*** (0.057)	-0.457*** (0.064)	-0.412*** (0.077)	-0.274*** (0.063)	-0.230*** (0.072)	-0.269*** (0.084)
Number treated	445	405	301	445	405	301
Observations	3,021	2,634	1,833	3,021	2,634	1,833
Probit matching						
Private school 2007-08	-0.476*** (0.057)	-0.532*** (0.065)	-0.505*** (0.074)	-0.277*** (0.064)	-0.272*** (0.069)	-0.284*** (0.075)
Number treated	445	405	301	445	405	301
Observations	3,021	2,634	1,833	3,021	2,634	1,833

Table A8: Stacking first-time eligibility, PSM estimates of the effects of EdChoice participation: Students first-time eligible between 2007–08 and 2010–11 are pooled, and control students attended schools zero to one point above threshold; repeated cross-section

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Mathematics			Reading		
	First-year scores	Second-year scores	Third-year scores	First-year scores	Second-year scores	Third-year scores
Panel A1: Logit matching						
Private school	-0.500*** (0.037)	-0.493*** (0.038)	-0.490*** (0.043)	-0.325*** (0.038)	-0.268*** (0.039)	-0.305*** (0.046)
Number treated	876	761	554	876	761	554
Observations	20,652	13,737	8,399	20,652	13,737	8,399
Panel A2: Probit matching						
Private school	-0.488*** (0.035)	-0.545*** (0.039)	-0.489*** (0.045)	-0.254*** (0.037)	-0.359*** (0.040)	-0.340*** (0.050)
Number treated	876	761	554	876	761	554
Observations	20,652	13,737	8,399	20,652	13,737	8,399

Table A9: Stacking first-time eligibility, PSM estimates of the effects of EdChoice participation: Students first-time eligible between 2007–08 and 2010–12 are pooled, and control students attended schools zero to one points above threshold; repeated cross-section

	(1)	(2)	(4)	(5)
	Mathematics		Reading	
	First-year scores	Second-year scores	First-year scores	Second-year scores
Panel A1: Logit matching				
Private school	-0.401*** (0.033)	-0.511*** (0.037)	-0.277*** (0.035)	-0.287*** (0.037)
Number treated	950	826	950	826
Observations	24,610	16,041	24,610	16,041
Panel A2: Probit matching				
Private school	-0.517*** (0.035)	-0.559*** (0.037)	-0.264*** (0.038)	-0.324*** (0.040)
Number treated	950	826	950	826
Observations	24,610	16,041	24,610	16,041

Table A10: Total effects of EdChoice eligibility, focusing on ninety-nine schools first eligible in 2006-07

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	No donut			Dropping schools with second best PI between 77 and 79.999				Dropping schools with second best PI between 75 and 79.999				
VARIABLES												
Panel A1: Panel (2004-06 to 2006-07) in reading. Residualized growth between 2004-05 and 2006-07												
Eligible	0.037**	0.029	0.052**	0.044**	0.030	0.002	0.047**	0.020	0.029	-0.024	0.051**	0.002
	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.033)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.022)	(0.037)
Observations	355,519	355,519	355,519	355,519	341,283	341,283	341,283	341,283	331,340	331,340	331,340	331,340
Panel B1: Panel (2004-06 to 2006-07) in mathematics. Residualized growth between 2004-05 and 2006-07												
Eligible	-0.006	0.015	0.014	0.027	-0.034	-0.014	-0.013	-0.006	-0.040	-0.015	-0.014	-0.006
	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.029)	(0.043)	(0.022)	(0.031)
Observations	248,881	248,881	248,881	248,881	238,446	238,446	238,446	238,446	231,370	231,370	231,370	231,370
Panel C1: Panel (2004-05 to 2007-08) in reading. Residualized growth between 2004-05 and 2007-08												
Eligible	0.048**	0.023	0.054***	0.037*	0.047**	-0.005	0.056***	0.014	0.061***	-0.013	0.073***	0.016
	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.028)	(0.020)	(0.029)	(0.023)	(0.039)	(0.022)	(0.038)
Observations	269,601	269,601	269,601	269,601	258,907	258,907	258,907	258,907	251,689	251,689	251,689	251,689
Panel D1: Panel (2004-06 to 2007-08) in mathematics. Residualized growth between 2004-05 and 2007-08												
Eligible	0.008	-0.002	0.020	0.010	-0.006	-0.049	0.009	-0.020	-0.000	-0.070	0.016	-0.043
	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.033)	(0.039)	(0.043)	(0.028)	(0.041)
Observations	165,701	165,701	165,701	165,701	158,679	158,679	158,679	158,679	154,230	154,230	154,230	154,230
Different slopes		X		X		X		X		X		X
Controls			X	X			X	X			X	X

Note: Standard errors are clustered at 2005-06 school level. Eligible is defined as below 0 threshold where threshold is PI-80. Controls include female, white-non-Hispanic, Black-non-Hispanic, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and grade dummies. All regressions also include running variable (PI relative to threshold) and interactions with being above or below threshold in the case of different slopes.

Endnotes

- ¹ Cleveland students and schools are not part of the EdChoice program, as Cleveland has a different longstanding school-voucher program in place.
 - ² For details, see *Establishing a Baseline: Ohio's Education System As It Enters a New Era*, Public Impact and Thomas B. Fordham Institute, August 2015.
 - ³ In the 2006–07 academic year, only 58.8 percent of voucher students in testing grades were matchable to testing records, according to Ohio Department of Education data. This figure increased to 73.9 percent in 2007–08 and to 85.8 percent in 2008–09. Since that time, the figure has varied between 82.3 percent and 93.4 percent. It is not entirely clear why test reporting got much better after the initial year of private school testing, but the compliance patterns are consistent with what might be expected given a phase-in of a new program.
 - ⁴ Office of Budget and Management, *State of Ohio: Budget Highlights, Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007* (August 2005): <http://obm.ohio.gov/budget/operating/doc/fy-06-07/budget-highlights.pdf>
 - ⁵ Examples of cases in which relatively low-performing students are more likely to attend private schools with a means-tested voucher include David Figlio, Cassandra Hart, and Molly Metzger, "Who Uses a Means-Tested Scholarship, and What Do They Choose?" *Economics of Education Review*, April 2010, and Cassandra Hart, "Contexts Matter: Selection in Means-Tested School Voucher Programs," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, June 2014. William Howell and Paul Peterson (with David Campbell and Patrick Wolf), *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools*, Brookings Institution Press, 2006, find evidence of, at most, modest positive selection into private schools, a result generally consistent with Patrick Wolf, et al., *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: First Year Report*, U.S. Department of Education, 2005, and David Fleming, Joshua Cowen, John Witte, and Patrick Wolf, "Similar Students, Different Choices: Who Uses a School Voucher in an Otherwise Similar Population of Students?" *Education and Urban Society*, 2015.
 - ⁶ We know of no other voucher systems that operate exactly like the EdChoice case. In Washington, DC, for instance, families must first be deemed eligible for a voucher and students must be deemed admissible to their private school of choice before being entered into the lottery (or automatically awarded vouchers, in the case of no oversubscription). In Milwaukee, students are admitted to private schools before seeking financial aid through the voucher system, but private schools cannot apply admission standards to voucher students.
 - ⁷ We ascribe no value judgment regarding whether it is better or worse if comparatively high-achieving (or high-income, etc.) students are those who make use of the EdChoice vouchers. The purpose of this section is simply to make clear that the design of voucher eligibility can help to determine which students make use of a school voucher. Different families might avail themselves of an EdChoice voucher under different circumstances.
 - ⁸ In this report, we often describe the magnitude of our findings in terms of the black-white test-score gap in order to gauge how large the estimated effects or differences are in comparison to other differences that we observe in the data. It is beyond the scope of this report to speculate about the causes of the black-white test-score gap.
 - ⁹ In some cases, a history of economic disadvantage could come from attending a school where all students are categorically deemed economically disadvantaged for purposes of the National School Lunch Program. Blanket classification of students as eligible for free or reduced-price lunches would bias the comparison here only if participants or nonparticipants are disproportionately from such schools.
-

- ¹⁰ See David Autor, David Figlio, Krzysztof Karbownik, Melanie Wasserman, and Jeffrey Roth, "Family Disadvantage and the Gender Gap in Behavioral and Educational Outcomes," Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research Working Paper 15-16 (December 2015), for a detailed investigation of this pattern.
- ¹¹ Unfortunately, we do not have access to the data that would allow us to gauge directly the degree to which schools' application of admissions standards drives these differences.
- ¹² See, for example, David Figlio and Cassandra Hart, "Competitive Effects of Means-Tested School Vouchers," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, January 2014, who show that the Florida means-tested school-voucher program induced positive competitive effects for public schools.
- ¹³ See, for example, Martin West and Paul Peterson, "The Efficacy of Choice Threats Within School Accountability Systems: Results from Legislatively Induced Experiments," *Economic Journal*, March 2006, which contends that choice threats augment the effects of school accountability for low-rated schools.
- ¹⁴ One example, David Figlio and Cecilia Rouse, "Do Accountability and Voucher Threats Improve Low-Performing Schools?" *Journal of Public Economics*, January 2006, argues that the positive effects on test scores of the initial roll-out of Florida's short-lived school-voucher system tied to school accountability were likely due more to grading stigma than to voucher threats per se.
- ¹⁵ Though four of the ten transitions Forster studied had negative average transitions for voucher-eligible schools versus other schools, none of these four differences were statistically distinct from zero at conventional levels. On the other hand, three of the six positive average transition differences were statistically distinct from zero at conventional levels of significance.
- ¹⁶ It would be desirable to study later rounds of the EdChoice voucher eligibility as well, but this becomes much more difficult to study because an increasingly large number of schools in the neighborhood of potential eligibility would have already become voucher eligible, and causal inference would become progressively more problematic. It is therefore best to limit the analysis to the first instance of a major policy change—that is, the change in the eligibility rules that first affected private school enrollment and eligibility in 2007–08.
- ¹⁷ It is also possible for a school to receive a designation above academic watch if, for example, AYP status is met or there was a sufficient growth in the school's PI score. However, because these other factors are not continuous measures, we emphasize the PI as the principal driver of a school's designation.
- ¹⁸ We very strongly prefer this approach to one analyzing the initial 2006–07 voucher-eligible schools, and we caution the reader that there are several important reasons to discount the first-round results. However, for completeness, we present results from the first-round EdChoice implementation in an appendix.
- ¹⁹ This would occur if a school was rated under academic watch or below in two of the three years of 2003–04, 2004–05, or 2005–06. Eligibility determination occurred in 2006–07 for eligibility in 2007–08, but to be as certain as possible that we were not identifying the effects of EdChoice eligibility based on people who endogenously sorted into schools in anticipation of a voucher, we use the more conservative 2005–06 school attendance to determine eligibility.
- ²⁰ In some analyses, we show the results both including and excluding the voucher users. Invariably, the results are virtually identical regardless of how we treat the voucher users in the analysis.
- ²¹ In order to estimate the lines reported in the figures, we weigh each point by the number of observations.
- ²² As before, this is measured as the growth in standardized reading (mathematics) scores between 2005–06 and 2007–08.

- ²³ We present estimates that are not statistically distinct from zero at conventional levels in outline only.
- ²⁴ There are theoretical reasons to believe that the slopes of this relationship would vary on either side of the threshold. If some public schools affected by voucher competition change their behaviors as a consequence of the competition, this might influence the subsequently observed relationship between the PI and test-score growth. As a consequence, we report the results both ways to assess the degree to which the estimated effects of vouchers on public school performance varies depending on statistical-modeling assumptions.
- ²⁵ Here, we stratify based on the school type the student was attending during the 2005–06 academic year.
- ²⁶ One might wonder why we do not simply compare those students who use a voucher to those remaining in the public schools. This comparison would be highly problematic because there are obvious differences between those students who select into private schools and those who do not. In addition to the selection differences described in section 3 of this report, it is also certainly the case that those students who move to private schools were those who were the most motivated to change schools and, of course, students had to have obtained admission to a private school in order to make use of the EdChoice scholarship. Any credible estimate of performance effects must take this type of selection into account, which is what motivates our estimation approach.
- ²⁷ An example of the application of PSM in a participant-effects evaluation of a school-voucher program is John Witte, Patrick Wolf, Joshua Cowen, Deven Carlson, and David Fleming, "High Stakes Choice: Achievement and Accountability in the Nation's Oldest Urban Voucher Program," *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, December 2014.
- ²⁸ One important continuing limitation is that everyone who is a participant has at least one type of unobserved factor that is correlated with participation in the program, while only some of the noneligible comparison group students will have the same unobservable variables correlated with participation. Therefore, it is still almost surely the case that the comparison groups are not identical on unobserved factors.
- ²⁹ In the analysis that follows, we consider comparison schools that never became voucher eligible in the future. We have also relaxed this restriction to look only at comparison schools that only remained voucher ineligible for the first three years of the program, and the results are extremely similar and available on request from the authors.
- ³⁰ We begin with the students newly eligible in 2007–08, because three-quarters or more of private school participants' testing records were only matchable to Ohio Department of Education student databases beginning in 2007–08. A considerably smaller fraction (58.8 percent) were matched in 2006–07, the first year of voucher eligibility for some students.
- ³¹ We report the repeated cross-section analysis only in order to save space.
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The pandemic has had devastating impacts on learning. What will it take to help students catch up?

BROOKINGS

RESEARCH

The pandemic has had devastating impacts on learning. What will it take to help students catch up?

Megan Kuhfeld, Jim Soland, Karyn Lewis, and Emily Morton

March 3, 2022

As we reach the two-year mark of the initial wave of pandemic-induced school shutdowns, academic normalcy remains out of reach for many students, educators, and parents. In addition to surging COVID-19 cases at the end of 2021, schools have faced [severe staff shortages](#), high rates of [absenteeism and quarantines](#), and [rolling school closures](#). Furthermore, students and educators continue to struggle with [mental health challenges](#), higher rates of [violence](#) and [misbehavior](#), and concerns about [lost instructional time](#).

As we outline in our [new research study](#) released in January, the cumulative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' academic achievement has been large. We tracked changes in math and reading test scores across the first two years of the pandemic using data from 5.4 million US students in grades 3-8. We focused on test scores from immediately before the pandemic (fall 2019), following the initial onset (fall 2020), and more than one year into pandemic disruptions (fall 2021).

Average fall 2021 math test scores in grades 3-8 were 0.20-0.27 standard deviations (SDs) lower relative to same-grade peers in fall 2019, while reading test scores were 0.09-0.18 SDs lower. This is a sizable drop. For context, the math drops are significantly larger than estimated impacts from other large-scale school disruptions, such as after Hurricane Katrina—math scores dropped 0.17 SDs in one year for [New Orleans evacuees](#).

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Even more concerning, test score gaps between students in low-poverty and high-poverty elementary schools grew by approximately 20% in math (corresponding to 0.20 SDs) and 15% in reading (0.13 SDs), primarily during the 2020-21 school year. Further, achievement tended to drop more between fall 2020 and 2021 than between fall 2019 and 2020 (both overall and differentially by school poverty), indicating that disruptions to learning have continued to negatively impact students well past the initial hits following the spring 2020 school closures.

These numbers are alarming and potentially demoralizing, especially given the heroic efforts of students to learn and educators to teach in incredibly trying times. From our perspective, these test score drops in no way indicate that these students represent a “lost generation” or that we should give up hope. Most of us have never lived through a pandemic, and there is so much we do not know about students’ capacity for resiliency in these circumstances and what a timeline for recovery will look like. Nor are we suggesting that teachers are somehow at fault given the achievement drops that occurred between 2020 and 2021; rather, educators had difficult jobs before the pandemic, and now are contending with huge new challenges, many outside their control.

Clearly, however, there’s work to do. School districts and states are currently making important decisions about which interventions and strategies to implement to mitigate the learning declines during the last two years. [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ESSER\)](#) investments from the American Rescue Plan provided nearly \$200 billion to public schools to spend on COVID-19-related needs. Of that sum, \$22 billion is dedicated specifically to addressing learning loss using “evidence-based interventions” focused on the [disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups](#). Reviews of district and state spending plans (see [Future Ed](#), [EduRecoveryHub](#), and RAND’s [American School District Panel](#) for more details) indicate that districts are spending their ESSER dollars designated for academic recovery on a wide variety of strategies, with summer learning, tutoring, after-school programs, and extended school-day and school-year initiatives rising to the top.

Comparing the negative impacts from learning disruptions to the positive impacts from interventions

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-pandemic-has-had-devastating-impacts-on-learning-what-will-it-take-to-help-students-catch-up/>

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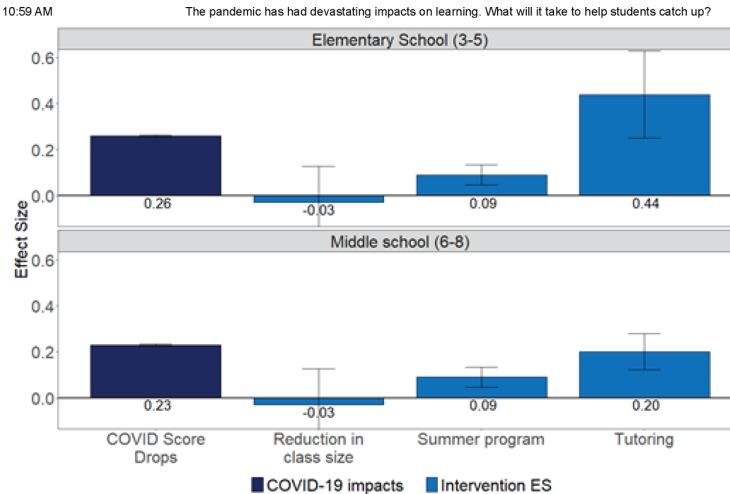
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To help contextualize the magnitude of the impacts of COVID-19, we situate test score drops during the pandemic relative to the test score gains associated with common interventions being employed by districts as part of pandemic recovery efforts. If we assume that such interventions will continue to be as successful in a COVID-19 school environment, can we expect that these strategies will be effective enough to help students catch up? To answer this question, we draw from recent reviews of research on [high-dosage tutoring](#), [summer learning programs](#), [reductions in class size](#), and [extending the school day \(specifically for literacy instruction\)](#). We report effect sizes for each intervention specific to a grade span and subject wherever possible (e.g., tutoring has been found to have larger effects in elementary math than in reading).

Figure 1 shows the standardized drops in math test scores between students testing in fall 2019 and fall 2021 (separately by elementary and middle school grades) relative to the average effect size of various educational interventions. The average effect size for math tutoring matches or exceeds the average COVID-19 score drop in math. [Research on tutoring](#) indicates that it often works best in younger grades, and when provided by a teacher rather than, say a parent. Further, some of the tutoring programs that produce the [biggest effects](#) can be quite intensive (and likely expensive), including having full-time tutors supporting all students (not just those needing remediation) in [one-on-one](#) settings during the school day. Meanwhile, the average effect of reducing class size is negative but not significant, with high variability in the impact across different studies. Summer programs in math have been found to be effective (average effect size of .10 SDs), though these programs in isolation likely would not eliminate the COVID-19 test score drops.

Figure 1: Math COVID-19 test-score drops compared to the effect sizes of various educational interventions

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(<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Figure-1-%E2%80%93-Math-COVID-19-test-score-drops-compared-to-the-effectsizes-of-various-educational-interventions.png>)

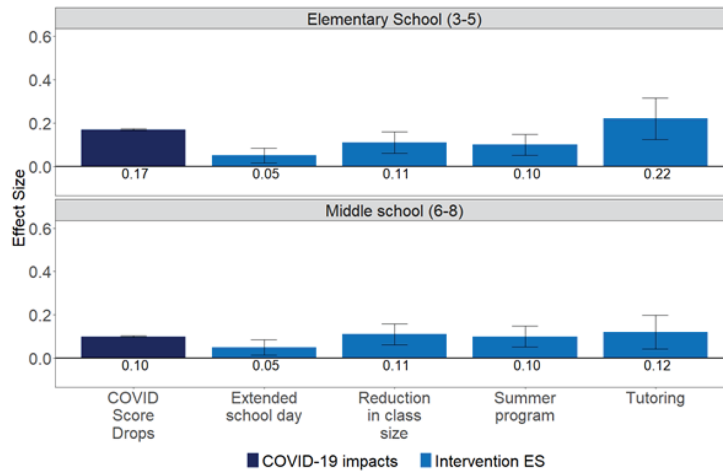
Source: COVID-19 score drops are pulled from [Kuhfeld et al. \(2022\)](#) Table 5; reduction-in-class-size results are from pg. 10 of [Figles et al. \(2018\)](#) Table 2; summer program results are pulled from [Lynch et al \(2021\)](#) Table 2; and tutoring estimates are pulled from [Nictow et al \(2020\)](#) Table 3B. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown with vertical lines on each bar

Notes: Kuhfeld et al. and Nictow et al. reported effect sizes separately by grade span; Figles et al. and Lynch et al. report an overall effect size across elementary and middle grades. We were unable to find a rigorous study that reported effect sizes for extending the school day/year on math performance. Nictow et al. and [Kraft & Falken \(2021\)](#) also note large variations in tutoring effects depending on the type of tutor with larger effects for teacher and paraprofessional tutoring programs than for nonprofessional and parent tutoring. Class-size reductions included in the Figles meta-analysis ranged from a minimum of one to minimum of eight students per class.

Figure 2 displays a similar comparison using effect sizes from reading interventions. The average effect of tutoring programs on reading achievement is larger than the effects found for the other interventions, though summer reading programs and class size reduction both produced average effect sizes in the ballpark of the COVID-19 reading score drops.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-pandemic-has-had-devastating-impacts-on-learning-what-will-it-take-to-help-students-catch-up/>

Figure 2: Reading COVID-19 test-score drops compared to the effect sizes of various educational interventions



<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Figure-2-%E2%80%93-Reading-COVID-19-test-score-drops-compared-to-the-effectsizes-of-various-educational-interventions.png>

Source: COVID-19 score drops are pulled from [Kuhfeld et al. \(2022\)](#) Table 5; extended-school-day results are from [Figlio et al. \(2018\)](#) Table 2; reduction-in-class-size results are from pg. 10 of [Figles et al. \(2018\)](#); summer program results are pulled from [Kim & Quinn \(2013\)](#) Table 3; and tutoring estimates are pulled from [Nictow et al \(2020\)](#) Table 3B. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown with vertical lines on each bar

Notes: While [Kuhfeld et al.](#) and [Nictow et al.](#) reported effect sizes separately by grade span, [Figlio et al.](#) and [Kim & Quinn](#) report an overall effect size across elementary and middle grades. Class-size reductions included in the [Figles meta-analysis](#) ranged from a minimum of one to minimum of eight students per class.

There are some limitations of drawing on research conducted prior to the pandemic to understand our ability to address the COVID-19 test score drops. First, these studies were conducted under conditions that are very different from what schools currently

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face, and it is an open question whether the effectiveness of these interventions during the pandemic will be as consistent as they were before the pandemic. Second, we have little evidence and guidance about the efficacy of these interventions at the unprecedented scale that they are now being considered. For example, many school districts are expanding summer learning programs, but school districts have [truggled to find staff](#) interested in teaching summer school to meet the increased demand. Finally, given the widening test-score gaps between low- and high-poverty schools, it's uncertain whether these interventions can actually combat the range of new challenges educators are facing in order to narrow these gaps. That is, students could catch up overall, yet the pandemic might still have lasting, negative effects on educational equality in this country

Given that the current initiatives are unlikely to be implemented consistently across (and sometimes within) districts, timely feedback on the effects of initiatives and any needed adjustments will be crucial to districts' success. The [Road to COVID Recovery](#) project and the [National Student Support Accelerator](#) are two such large-scale evaluation studies that aim to produce this type of evidence while providing resources for districts to track and evaluate their own programming. Additionally, a growing number of resources have been produced with recommendations on how to best implement recovery programs, including scaling up [tutoring](#), [summer learning programs](#), and [expanded learning time](#).


Ultimately, there is much work to be done, and the challenges for students, educators, and parents are considerable. But this may be a moment when decades of educational reform, intervention, and research pay off. Relying on what we have learned could show the way forward.

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February 12, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
 Chairman
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
 and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
 and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of a national network of more than 380,000 supporters, Americans United for Separation of Church and State writes to voice our strong opposition to the nomination of Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education. Because we oppose private school vouchers, we oppose Ms. McMahon. She advocated for private school vouchers at America First Policy Institute and repeatedly highlights vouchers in her opening statement, which is particularly alarming given President Trump's executive order calling for the Secretary of Education to devise ways to funnel public funds to private school vouchers.

Americans United is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit educational and advocacy organization that brings together people of all religions and none to safeguard the fundamental American principle of the separation of church and state. We protect the right of everyone to practice the religion of their choice or no religion at all, so long as it does not harm others. Since our founding in 1947, we have fought to ensure that public funds go to public schools.

Private school vouchers don't work, increase costs, fund discrimination, and violate religious freedom. Vouchers are also unpopular.¹ Public dollars should fund public schools, which serve nearly 90% of America's schoolchildren.

Private school vouchers do not improve educational outcomes. Studies of the Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio² voucher programs revealed that students who used vouchers actually performed worse on standardized tests than their peers not in voucher programs. In fact, the learning losses in Louisiana and Ohio are worse than those caused by the COVID-19

¹ Voters across the country have opposed private school vouchers, voting down ballot measures every time they've been on the ballot—seventeen times. In 2024, voters in Kentucky, Nebraska, and Colorado rejected voucher ballot measures. In fact, in 47 counties in Kentucky and Nebraska, where they also voted for President Trump by a 70+ point margin, voters opposed vouchers.

² Megan Austin, R. Joseph Waddington, & Mark Berends, [Voucher Pathways and Student Achievement in Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program](#), 22, Russell Sage Found., 2019; Parag A. Pathak & Christopher R. Walters, [Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?](#), 10, Am. Econ. Journal: Applied Econ., Jan. 2018; David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, [Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, and Performance Effects](#), 32, Fordham Inst., Jul. 2016.

pandemic.³ Studies of long-standing voucher programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, DC,⁴ found that students offered vouchers showed no improvement in reading or math over those not in the program. Voucher programs also provide fewer educational resources than public schools. For example, a survey of the private schools in Milwaukee's voucher program found that nearly 35% reported offering no art, music, physical education, library, or technology specialist teachers.⁵

And despite claims to the contrary, voucher programs do not result in cost savings. In state after state, voucher programs primarily fund tuition for families who can already afford to pay for private schools.⁶ This forces the government to pay new costs for education that were previously borne by those wealthy families.

In fact, private school voucher programs have a history of fraud and abuse. In North Carolina, for example, an investigation found that the state lost approximately \$2.3 million to fraud by sending voucher funds to private schools to pay for students who don't exist and private schools that were actually closed.⁷ In Arizona, vouchers were used to pay for Amazon gift cards, ski trips, pizza ovens, and trampolines,⁸ while in Florida families used these funds to pay for paddle boards, big-screen televisions, foosball tables, and trips to Disney World.⁹

Private school voucher programs are particularly harmful to rural schools. Rural public schools are the hub of community life serving as emergency shelters, gathering places, healthcare and food distribution centers, and polling locations. Because the margins for operating a public school in rural communities are incredibly small, the departure of a few students can leave rural schools with fewer resources to provide both educational instruction and non-instructional benefits for the communities. And the communities then have to figure out how else they can get the resources and services they need.

Instead of funneling public funds to private schools, we should invest in our public schools. Public schools are open to and must serve all students—indeed, they educate 9 in 10 kids in our country. Private schools, on the other hand, often leave students and families without the

³ Math scores dropped by 0.4 standard deviations in Louisiana and 0.5 standard deviations in Ohio, while the pandemic lowered scores by 0.2-0.27 standard deviations. Megan Kuhfeld, et al., [The Pandemic Has Had Devastating Impacts on Learning. What Will It Take to Help Students Catch Up?](#), Brookings Inst. (Mar. 3, 2022).

⁴ Patrick J. Wolf, [The Comprehensive Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Summary of Final Reports](#), 7, School Choice Demonstration Project, Univ. of Ark., Apr. 2010; Jonathan Plucker et al., [Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program. Technical Report 1998-2004](#), 166, Ctr. for Evaluation & Educ. Policy, Univ. of Ind., Feb. 2006; Ann Webber et al., [Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Three Years After Students Applied](#), 4, U.S. Dep't of Educ., May 2019.

⁵ Erin Richards, [Report: Choice Schools Lack Specialty Teachers](#), *Milwaukee J. Sentinel* (Feb. 13, 2013).

⁶ For example, in Arkansas, 95% of participating voucher students never attended public school (Ark. Dept. of Educ., [Education Freedom Account Annual Report, 2023-2024 School Year](#), 8 (Oct. 9, 2023)); in Arizona, 80% never attended public school (Eryka Forquer, [Applications for School Vouchers at Nearly 22,500 So Far, Education Department Says](#), *Ariz. Republic* (Oct. 7, 2022)); and in New Hampshire, 89% of voucher recipients were already in private school (Ethan DeWitt, [Most Education Freedom Account Recipients Not Leaving Public Schools, Department Says](#), *N.H. Bulletin* (Mar. 28, 2022)).

⁷ Kris Nordstrom, [New Analysis Shows Many Private Schools in N.C. Have More Vouchers Than Students](#), *N.C. Justice Ctr.* (June 16, 2023).

⁸ Melissa Blasius & Garrett Archer, [Arizona Empowerment Scholarships: What \\$304 Million Bought](#), *ABC15 Arizona in Phoenix (KNXV)* (Oct. 3, 2023).

⁹ Lucy Dillon, [Megacon Orlando Announces Its 2025 Return with Four Days of Fandom Madness](#), *Orlando Weekly* (Oct. 31, 2024).

educational choices they purport to provide. They can deny students admission or expel them for a host of reasons, such as their religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, academic abilities, or disability status.

Not only can private schools categorically exclude students, but they also do not abide by the same civil rights requirements as public schools, and in fact, private school voucher programs perpetuate racial segregation.¹⁰ This is not surprising given that private school vouchers were first designed to evade desegregation orders and fund segregation academies that were created to keep Black and white students apart in the wake of the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

For students with disabilities, the consequences of losing the rights and protections provided in public schools can be devastating. Students who leave the public schools with a voucher forfeit many of the protections provided to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Moreover, private schools accepting vouchers do not provide students with disabilities with the same quality and quantity of services available to students in public schools—or private schools simply refuse to educate students with disabilities altogether.

Public schools are also secular and so are open to students of all religions and none. Yet vouchers predominantly fund students to attend private, religious schools¹¹ where instilling religion is a central goal. This conflicts with one of the most dearly held principles of religious freedom: the government should not compel anyone to fund religion, especially one with which they may disagree. Many religious schools also impose a religious litmus test on students, teachers, and their families—but taxpayer dollars also should never fund this kind of discrimination. Parents certainly may choose a religious education for their children, but they may not demand that the taxpayers foot the bill.

Public schools are popular. They are vital to our children, our communities, our workforce, our society, and our democracy. We urge you to oppose the nomination of Linda McMahon because she wants to take taxpayer funds away from our public schools to pay for private schools for a small number of wealthy families.

Sincerely,



Dena Sher
Associate Vice President, Public Policy



Alessandro Terenzoni
Vice President, Public Policy

cc: Members of the Committee

¹⁰ National data show that private schools tend to be more segregated than similarly situated public schools and enroll higher populations of white students compared to public schools. See Nat'l Center for Educ. Statistics, U.S. Dep't of Educ., [School Choice in the United States: 2019](#), 22 (Sept. 2019). Steve Suitts, *Overturning Brown: The Segregationist Legacy of the Modern School Choice Movement*, 77 (2020).

¹¹ For example, a review of Alabama's voucher program found that 90% of participating schools were religious (Tricia Powell Crain, [Alabama School Choice Scholarship Funds Students to Attend Religious Private Schools](#), *Al.com*, (Aug. 1, 2022)) and in the Arkansas voucher program, 87% of participating schools are religious (Steve Brawner, [Eighty-Four Private Schools Approved for LEARNS Money](#), *Magnolia Reporter* (Aug. 3, 2023)).



February 4th, 2025

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the 100,000 members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I write to express **strong opposition to Linda McMahon's nomination for U.S. Secretary of Education** due to her having no significant background in education, school administration, or civil rights protections, making her unsuitable for this position.

To ensure a future of equal opportunity — and equal rewards — in the workforce, we need to start with our educational system. The U.S. Department of Education is charged with protecting students' civil rights and expanding educational opportunity and attainment for all students. Essential to this is removing gender-based barriers that keep not only girls but all students from pursuing their dreams and reaching their potential.

The Department of Education is charged with overseeing federal funds targeted to closing achievement gaps in student populations, including for students with disabilities, low-income students, and minority students. McMahon's support for diverting resources away from public schools in order to fund the education of a few students at private schools do not provide the same rights and protections to students as public schools, such as the protections in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act. For example, students in private voucher schools can be denied Title IX enforcement by the U.S. Department of Education even when schools fail to create climates safe from sexual harassment and assault, discriminate against pregnant and LGBTQ students, or discriminate in hiring teachers.

Contrary to the U.S. Department of Education's mission to implement laws protecting students from discrimination based on sex, race, color, disability, age, and national origin, McMahon has demonstrated hostility toward Title IX protections for LGBTQ+ students. She also seeks to dismantle initiatives in higher education spaces, threatening the inclusion and success of youth with diverse perspectives and backgrounds on college and university campuses. The next Secretary of Education should be committed to strengthening students' civil rights, not weakening them.

For these reasons, AAUW urges you to vote no on Linda McMahon's nomination to be the Secretary of Education. Voting on McMahon's nomination may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund's *Congressional Voting Record* for the 119th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-728-3300 or kissellm@aauw.org with any questions.

Sincerely,
Meghan Kissell, MSW
Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy



Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chair
Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Subject: Opposition to the Nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education

Dear Chair Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the HELP Committee,

As advocates for students and young people across the country, we write to express our strong opposition to the nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education. Advocates for Youth partners with young people and their adult allies to champion youth rights to bodily autonomy and build power to transform policies, programs and systems to secure sexual health and equity for all youth. Founded in 2013, Know Your IX is a survivor- and youth-led project of Advocates for Youth that aims to empower students to end sexual and gender-based violence in their schools. We envision a world in which all students can pursue their civil right to an education free from violence and harassment.

The U.S. Department of Education is a civil rights agency with the essential responsibility of ensuring that every student has equitable access to educational opportunities. The Secretary of Education must be committed to creating safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments for all students – yet Linda McMahon’s track record and affiliations make clear that she is entirely unqualified for this critical role.

McMahon’s background offers no experience in public education, pedagogy, or the complex policies that govern our nation’s schools. Her only prior government experience is leading the Small Business Administration under the Trump administration—a role wholly unrelated to education. Worse, she has a history of misrepresenting her own academic credentials, including falsely claiming an education degree from East Carolina University, demonstrating a troubling lack of integrity and credibility.

President Trump’s choice of McMahon mirrors his previously disastrous appointment of Betsy DeVos, who led the creation of the Trump administration’s anti-survivor Title IX rule, rolling back students’ civil rights protections. Similar to DeVos’ legacy of eroding protections for students, the Trump administration has signalled that McMahon’s role as Secretary would be to dismantle key functions of The Department of Education that are meant to protect student civil

rights. As chair of the America First Policy Institute, McMahon has actively supported efforts to privatize education, defund public schools, and push policies that would disproportionately harm marginalized students. She is expected to champion Trump's school voucher initiatives, restrict discussions of systemic racism in classrooms, and advocate for policies that discriminate against transgender students—positions that stand in direct opposition to the Department of Education's mission to protect all students' civil rights.

Most disturbingly, McMahon and her husband, Vince McMahon, have been named in a federal lawsuit alleging that they enabled the sexual abuse of underaged children within World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), the company they co-founded. According to the lawsuit, McMahon failed to act on well-known allegations that a WWE employee engaged in systemic sexual abuse of minors, a complete abdication of responsibility to protect their employees from sexual harassment and violence. McMahon's negligence and complicity in contributing to a culture of sexual abuse is entirely disqualifying for any position of public trust, let alone leadership over the nation's schools. Moreover, McMahon's confirmation would put the enforcement of Title IX further at risk, a civil rights law that students rely on to protect them and hold schools accountable to respond to sexual harassment and discrimination. Her nomination to lead the Department despite this failure to protect youth is betrayal of student survivors everywhere.

In conclusion, the appointment of Linda McMahon would be a grave injustice to students and young people across the country – who rely on the Department of Education's leadership to protect their civil rights and hold their schools accountable. The Secretary of Education must be a champion for all young people—regardless of race, gender, disability, or economic status—not someone beholden to special interests intent on dismantling public education and undermining the civil rights of marginalized students. Her nomination reflects a reckless disregard for the Department's civil rights mandate and a clear prioritization of political loyalty over young people's access to an education free from discrimination.

We at Advocates for Youth and Know Your IX urge you to oppose Linda McMahon's nomination and instead advocate for a candidate with genuine experience in public education, a commitment to student equity, and a record of ethical leadership. Students, young people, teachers, and communities deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Emma Grasso Levine
Senior Manager, Title IX Policy and Programs
Know Your IX, Advocates for Youth



February 13, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair
U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

As the Chairman, the Ranking Member, and the distinguished members of this Committee know, our nation's public education system unlocks the promise of America. A promise that all of our children, regardless of zip code, circumstance, or individual exceptionalities, will be given the opportunity to thrive, to have their potential recognized and fostered, and to be seen as critical members of our diverse and complex democracy. A promise that children growing up on a farm in rural Appalachia or a high-rise apartment in New York, children from families of means or low-income families, and children who need support for their giftedness and their dyslexia will all have a world of opportunities open to them.

Over the last forty-five years, our Department of Education has worked to meet this promise, to ensure that every child in our nation is afforded those opportunities. Each of the over 16,500 days that the Department has existed has seen the work of dedicated, world-renowned experts, educators, and educational leaders striving to make our public education system the best that it can be.

The question before this Committee is how will we move this work forward?

Will we, as a nation, commit to guaranteeing that the Department of Education remains the cornerstone of our nation's commitment to ensuring every child has access to quality education?

Will we support students, families, educators, and school and district leaders across the country in continuing to see all of our children as the future of our nation? And in continuing to believe that education is the springboard to opportunity for all?

As Congressional leaders, we expect you to stand in the gap, uphold the Constitution, and ensure this administration does not destroy the future of our young people with its policies. That policy agenda is why All4Ed opposes the nomination of the Honorable Linda McMahon to be the next Secretary of Education.

In our ever-changing world, our nation's children deserve a Secretary of Education who will take the helm of the Department and strengthen, rather than dismantle, these core functions while addressing education's pressing challenges today. Our students navigate an increasingly complex world that demands new skills and competencies. They need safe, supportive learning environments to develop critical thinking abilities, emotional intelligence, and the knowledge necessary to succeed in the 21st century.

As our Congressional leaders, we urge you to ask whether Secretary-Designate McMahon is committed to:

1. Maintaining robust civil rights enforcement to protect all students from discrimination and ensure equal educational opportunities, as required by federal law.
2. Preserving and enhancing federal funding streams that support high-need schools and students, including Title I and IDEA.
3. Strengthening data collection and research initiatives that help identify effective educational practices and improvement areas.
4. Continuing federal oversight of student loan programs while working to make higher education more affordable and accessible.
5. Supporting initiatives that promote safe and healthy learning environments, including efforts to address school safety and mental health.
6. Protecting and enforcing policies that safeguard vulnerable student populations.
7. Strengthening coordination with other federal agencies to ensure seamless delivery of essential services to students and families, including healthcare, nutrition assistance, and digital connectivity programs.

The Department of Education's role in establishing protections helps ensure all students can access the promise of education - a fundamental pillar of our nation's commitment to its young people. Dismantling these protections would betray that promise and their future. Now more than ever, we must strengthen, not weaken, the Department so it can advance educational equity, support educators, and prepare students for tomorrow's challenges.

As a leading education advocacy organization, All4Ed stands firmly committed to protecting our young people and our public education system, no matter the obstacles. Our experience shows that a strong federal role in education, partnering with states and local communities, is essential for nurturing the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

Your leadership is crucial for maintaining these protections while fostering innovation and excellence in American education. All4Ed stands ready to work with you to strengthen the Department of Education and advance its vital mission of promoting student achievement, ensuring equal access, and preparing all students for global competitiveness. Unfortunately, we must oppose the nomination of the Honorable Linda McMahon because she has committed to implementing policies that we believe will be harmful to public education and, ultimately, to our students.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Amy Loyd". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Amy Loyd, Ed.L.D.
Chief Executive Officer
All4Ed

CC: The Honorable Rand Paul, The Honorable Susan Collins, The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, The Honorable Markwayne Mullin, The Honorable Roger Marshall, The Honorable Tim Scott, The Honorable Josh Hawley, The Honorable Tommy Tuberville, The Honorable Jim Banks, The Honorable Jon Husted, The Honorable Ashley Moody, The Honorable Patty Murray, The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, The Honorable Christopher Murphy, The Honorable Tim Kaine, The Honorable Maggie Hassan, The Honorable John Hickenlooper, The Honorable Ed Markey, The Honorable Andy Kim, The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester, The Honorable Angela Alsobrooks



February 12, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair
U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

The Center for American Progress is writing to express our serious concerns regarding the confirmation of Ms. Linda McMahon as the Secretary of Education. As Secretary of Education, Ms. McMahon would be used to further carry out Project 2025 and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)'s agenda to abolish the U.S. Department of Education (ED). By confirming Ms. McMahon as the Secretary of Education, the United States Senate would put an imprimatur on these illegal actions. In fact, it is questionable that the United States Senate has not engaged in effective oversight of Elon Musk and DOGE before proceeding with this confirmation hearing. How can a confirmation hearing for a Secretary of Education take place when the Senate has done nothing to ensure that a functional Department of Education remains in place? Before proceeding with this confirmation hearing, the United States Senate should fully investigate all of the actions that Elon Musk, DOGE, and the Trump Administration have taken with respect to the Department of Education and its programs. Furthermore, the United States Senate should hold these actors accountable for all such illegal actions. To be clear, oversight must come first.

ED has been a fundamental resource in driving global innovation and competitiveness. Since 1979, it has played a key role in administering elementary and secondary education programs, ensuring local schools comply with federal and civil rights laws, and overseeing federal financial aid that makes post-secondary learning more accessible. Through these efforts and more, the Department has been at the forefront of ensuring all Americans have access to a quality education.

The Project 2025/Musk agenda to dismantle ED is misguided and will strain states that are already facing [budget shortfalls](#). Local schools and districts will be impacted by teacher layoffs, larger class sizes and long-term damage to academic progress. Abolishing ED will also create a significant gap in federal education expertise. The Center for American Progress calls on the United States Senate to oppose the confirmation of Linda McMahon as a rebuke of the Project 2025/Musk agenda to eliminate ED and to engage in oversight regarding the dismantling of the Department of Education.

Sincerely,

The Center for American Progress



80 Pine St., 28th Floor
New York, NY 10005
212-279-8510

The Honorable William Cassidy, Chair
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building,
Washington, DC, 20510

February 11, 2025

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders,

In advance of Linda McMahon's confirmation hearing for U.S. Secretary of Education, we are writing to express Educators for Excellence's (E4E) strong opposition both to her nomination and to the Administration's education-related actions thus far. Additionally, we are writing to outline our policy priorities for the U.S. Department of Education under the next Secretary and demand that any prospective Secretary prioritize teacher-led and student-centered policy-making during their tenure. With [further declining test scores and widening achievement gaps on the National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#), the role of the US Secretary of Education is more critical than ever.

As educators, we are deeply invested in each student's academic success and access to opportunity. As U.S. citizens, we are also invested in our country's economic and democratic future and know firsthand the positive impact a strong K-12 public education system will have on our nation.

Unfortunately, the irresponsible, incendiary, and in some cases illegal actions taken or sought by the Trump Administration since the inauguration act in direct opposition to these pursuits. They are also widely opposed by teachers nationwide: preliminary analysis of our nationally representative survey of 1,000 teachers, conducted last month, finds that no more than 20% of teachers support any of the Trump Administration's stated educational priorities or actions taken thus far. We renounce any efforts by the agency—whether led by Linda McMahon or someone else—to support or enforce the following:

- The elimination or block granting of critical federal funding streams like Title I, Title 3, and IDEA that increase our most vulnerable student populations' access to learning opportunities
- The elimination or reduction of Institute of Education Science (IES) funded research and evaluation programs—like Teacher and School Leader Incentive Grants (TSL), the Teacher Quality Partnership Program (TQP), and the Supporting Effective Educator Development Grant Program (SEED)—that provide funding directly to districts to identify and scale innovative, evidence-based teaching practices

[f /Educators4Excellence](#)
[@Ed4Excellence](#)
[E4E.org](#)

- The illegal attempt to interfere in local curriculum decision-making, limiting access to culturally relevant teaching materials that 88% of teachers nationwide support
- The rolling back of guidance that prevented Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents from entering school buildings, thus intentionally sowing confusion and fear among students who are members of immigrant families and negatively impacting their school culture, attendance, and academic performance
- The removal of federal protections—that 84% of teachers nationally support—against discrimination for LGBTQ+ students, which will impede affirming and safe school environments for a population that already reports the highest levels of bullying and self-harm
- Attempts to prohibit transgender students from identifying by names, participating in sports, or using facilities aligned with their gender identity
- The proposed dissolution of the U.S. Department of Education, which would undoubtedly increase opportunity gaps nationwide and further undermine our system's ability to graduate young people prepared to engage civically and digitally and to succeed professionally

In our unwavering dedication to building an education system that increases access to opportunity for all our students, we call on the future Secretary to maintain and improve—rather than decimate—the federal government's and U.S. Department of Education's pivotal role in creating an excellent and equitable education system led by a high-quality, diverse workforce, in the following ways:

1. **Federal funding and resources** are the foundation of equitable access to high-quality, well-funded education. We call on the Secretary to protect critically essential funding sources like Title I, Title 3, and IDEA from funding cuts and to ensure these dollars support the students for whom they are intended and remain in public schools with public accountability.
2. **Student safety and well-being** are prerequisites to learning, but fear and divisiveness, driven by rhetoric, seep into schools and undermine success. We call on the Secretary to maintain funding sources for social and emotional programs that benefit all students while also specifically supporting our most vulnerable students by reinstating schools as immigration "sensitive zones" and Title IX protections for gender and sexual identity.
3. **Evidence-based curricular materials** are among the most cost-effective ways to bolster student success, but too many students lack access to them. We call on the Secretary to leverage federal funding and guidance to encourage the adoption of these materials and the implementation of aligned professional learning.
4. **Modernization of the teacher role** is long overdue. We call on the Secretary to maintain existing funding streams that encourage districts to establish innovative staffing and compensation approaches, increase flexibility for using Title 2 funds to modernize the role, and further expand investment in this area.

5. **Diverse career pathways** are necessary to prepare students for an ever-changing future. We call on the Secretary to invest in and guide states as they establish and improve apprenticeship, career and technical, and dual enrollment programs that create economic opportunities for every student.
6. **Assessment innovation** is critical as we broaden the outcomes we value and seek to measure them effectively. We call on the Secretary to maintain the assessment requirements codified in ESEA that allow us to communicate progress, expose opportunity gaps, and direct resources and interventions where they are most needed, while also investing in reimagining assessments to better serve and fit the needs of teachers and students.

As you consider Linda McMahon's nomination for the position of Secretary of Education, we ask that you weigh her willingness to reject short-sighted, chaotic, or malicious policymaking and her intent to seek out the voices of educators who understand our system most intimately. We ask that you thoroughly evaluate her professional background and qualifications and to what extent they align with the ability to effectively serve nearly 50 million students nationwide. Ultimately, E4E believes that McMahon is not suited or prepared to serve in this way and that the Committee should reject her nomination.

We must have a leader who answers teachers' calls and believes in the need to reimagine the United States's approach to K-12 education—not dismantle it. The future of our education system—and our economic and democratic prosperity—depends on it.

Educators for Excellence

Evan Stone, Co-founder and CEO

Members of the National Teacher Leader Council:

Cory L. Cain, Dean of Instruction, Chicago, IL	Carlotta Pope, Eleventh Grade English Teacher, Brooklyn, NY
Richard de Meij, K-8 World Languages Teacher, Hartford, CT	Susan Providence, Special Education Teacher, St. Paul, MN
Caroline Dowd, Preschool Teacher, Hartford, CT	Nazila Ramjan, English as a New Language and Civics Teacher, Queens, NY
Arthur Everett, High School Social Studies Teacher, Brooklyn, NY	Michael Simmon, 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher, Bronx, NY
Genelle Faulkner, High School Biology Teacher, Boston, MA	Joseph Tadros, High School Mathematics Team Supervisor, Brooklyn, NY
Daniel Gannon, Career and Technical Principal, Yorktown Heights, NY	Becky Trammell, Elementary Special Education Teacher, Minneapolis, MN
Valerie Green-Thomas, Middle School Instructional Coach and English Teacher, Bronx, NY	Dr. Winnie Williams-Hall, Elementary Special Education Teacher, Chicago, IL
Misti Kemmer, Fourth Grade Teacher, Los Angeles, CA	
Eli Levine, Physical Education Teacher, Bronx, NY	
Dr. Jennifer López, High School Social Studies Teacher, Los Angeles, CA	

END RAPE **ON CAMPUS**

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chair
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Subject: Opposition to the Nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education

Dear Chair Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the HELP Committee,

We, End Rape On Campus, students, campus administrators, survivors, and advocates, write to express our strong opposition to the nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education. Our concerns are grounded in serious ethical, professional, and policy-related issues that we believe disqualify her from leading the U.S. Department of Education. We urge the Committee to take these concerns into account and conduct a thorough, transparent review of her record before considering her confirmation.

About End Rape On Campus (EROC)

End Rape On Campus (EROC) works to end campus sexual violence through support for survivors and their communities, prevention through education, and policy reform at the campus, local, state, and federal levels. EROC envisions a world where each individual has an educational experience free from violence, and until then, that all survivors are believed, trusted, and supported.

EROC's work is driven by its Centering the Margins framework,¹ which aims to address and fill the disparity of resources between different communities, with the intention of centering historically excluded and systemically marginalized student survivors.

1. Allegations of Misconduct and Cover-Up of a Sex Trafficking Ring

The most pressing and deeply troubling concern regarding Ms. McMahon's nomination is her alleged involvement in covering up knowledge of a sex trafficking ring.² The existing public evidence and testimonies from those affected raise serious ethical and legal questions about her leadership capabilities and liabilities.³ It is inconceivable that an

¹ <https://endrapeoncampus.org/centering-margins/>

² https://s.wsj.net/public/resources/documents/WWE_complaint.pdf

³ <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/ringmaster-vince-mcmahon-excerpt-1234696067/>;
<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3759217-Tom-Cole-Unfiled-1992->

END RAPE ON CAMPUS

individual with such grave allegations leveled against them should be considered for a position responsible for the safety, well-being, and education of America's students. Ethical leadership is paramount in education, and it is imperative that the Committee demand a full and rigorous examination of all available evidence. The integrity of this nomination process requires complete transparency and accountability, particularly when the welfare of students is at stake. Until these allegations are fully investigated and addressed then, only if she is exonerated, Ms. McMahon should not be considered for this critical role.

If the tenure of former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos under the Trump Administration's first term taught us anything, it is that student survivors' rights are neither guaranteed nor protected.⁴ Students at the margins will be disproportionately harmed, protections will be rolled back, and campus sexual violence will escalate unchecked⁵. Schools will no longer be held accountable for their obligations⁶ under Title IX, and perpetrators will once again be shielded at the expense of the safety and well-being of school communities across the United States.⁷ The perpetuation of harm under Ms. McMahon's leadership would continue an unrelenting cycle of violence and exacerbate the institutional betrayal⁸ that so many student survivors already face.

2. Hostility Toward LGBTQ+ Rights, DEI Initiatives, and Women's Equality

Ms. McMahon's political and ideological track record further disqualifies her from overseeing the nation's education system. Her leadership in a conservative think tank, America First Policy Institute, that has openly opposed LGBTQ+ rights, particularly with an anti-trans stance, is deeply concerning.⁹ The Department of Education has a duty to protect and uplift all students, including LGBTQ+ youth, who are among the most vulnerable populations in our schools. Moreover, her criticism of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives,¹⁰ along with her expressed misogynistic views,¹¹ is in direct conflict with the responsibilities of the Secretary of Education and a violation of civil and human rights of LGBTQ+, women, people of color, and other marginalized communities. The leader of this department must be an advocate for equitable education, not an opponent of policies designed to ensure fairness and inclusion.

⁴<https://www.aclu.org/news/womens-rights/devos-is-rolling-back-protections-for-sexual-harassment-and-assault-survivors-in-schools-were-suing-to-put-a-stop-to-it>

⁵<https://19thnews.org/2021/12/universities-sexual-assault-red-zone/>

⁶<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ellievhall/betsy-devos-title-ix-campus-sexual-assault>

⁷<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/08/devos-campus-sexual-assault-title-ix/>

⁸<https://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/institutionalbetrayal/index.html>

⁹<https://glaad.org/gap/linda-mcmahon/>

¹⁰<https://www.outsports.com/2019/7/3/20680694/wwe-ufc-linda-mcmahon-ari-emanuel-donald-trump-homophobia/>

¹¹<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/bidens-dei-mandates-employers-fail-american-workers>

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3. Misrepresentation of Qualifications and False Credentials

It is also alarming that Ms. McMahon has misrepresented her qualifications, including falsely claiming to hold a degree in education.¹² The integrity of the Department of Education depends on leaders who are honest and transparent about their professional backgrounds. The Committee must prioritize verifying the authenticity of Ms. McMahon's credentials and explore the precedent for disqualifying nominees who have misled the public. Holding her accountable for any misstatements, and lack of understanding about educational credentialing, is essential in maintaining the trustworthiness of the Department and ensuring that its leadership meets the highest ethical and professional standards.

4. Lack of Relevant Education Experience

Finally, Ms. McMahon's professional background does not meet the qualifications required to lead the Department of Education. The Secretary of Education must possess a strong foundation in education policy, administrative leadership, and experience advocating for students, teachers, and schools. To fairly evaluate her competency, we urge the Committee to compare her qualifications with those of past Secretaries of Education and assess any deficiencies.¹³ Additionally, we encourage the Committee to consult education experts, advocacy organizations, and individuals directly impacted by her past actions. Their insights will provide a fuller picture of Ms. McMahon's suitability (or lack thereof) for this role.

The statistics on campus sexual violence highlight the dire need for leadership that ensures the protection and support of all students. K-12, and college-aged students between the ages of 18-24 are at risk of sexual assault at a rate three times higher than other groups.¹⁴ Furthermore, 1 in 5 women, 1 in 4 trans or gender-nonconforming persons,¹⁵ and 1 in 16 men experience sexual violence during their time in college. These statistics are even more alarming for protected classes of students, as Black, Latinx, Indigenous,¹⁶ LGBTQ+,¹⁷ and students with disabilities or neurodivergence¹⁸ face disproportionately high rates of sexual violence, yet receive the least institutional support. We need a Secretary of Education who understands civil rights, prioritizes

¹²https://web.archive.org/web/20120429230236/http://articles.courant.com/2010-04-04/news/hc-mcmahon-questionnaire-0404.artapr04_1_linda-mcmahon-answers-wrestling

¹³<https://www.edweek.org/federal/at-a-glance-u-s-secretaries-of-education>

¹⁴<https://endrapeoncampus.org/centering-margins/>

¹⁵<https://endrapeoncampus.org/centering-margins/transgender-nonconfirming-and-nonbinary-communities/>

¹⁶<https://endrapeoncampus.org/centering-margins/survivors-of-color/survivors-of-color-prevalence-rates/>

¹⁷<https://endrapeoncampus.org/centering-margins/lgbq-communities/>

¹⁸<https://endrapeoncampus.org/centering-margins/survivors-with-disabilities/>

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the safety and well-being of marginalized students, and is committed to enforcing protections that ensure equitable access to education, justice, and support for all students.

Despite these overwhelming disparities, institutions continue to prioritize reputational protection over student safety, with more than 50% of campus sexual assaults occurring within the first 6-8 weeks of school, during the “Red Zone.”¹⁹ Without strong leadership in the U.S. Department of Education protections for these students will erode, and institutions will face even less accountability in upholding Title IX and other civil rights obligations.

In fact, nearly 40% of survivors who reported sexual violence to their schools experienced a substantial disruption in their education. Campus survivors experience a range of education-related financial burdens as a result of sexual violence, including a decline in academic performance that can lead to financial aid and scholarship loss, academic probation, taking time off and dropping out, and long-term impact on employment and graduate school opportunities.²⁰ Further studies have shown that students who experienced sexual assault during their first college semester had a direct impact on their mental health, including significant rates of depression and anxiety. Since depression and anxiety hinder both academic performance and college retention, prevention sexual assault is crucial for safeguarding students’ well-being and ensuring their academic success.²¹

If confirmed, Linda McMahon would be responsible for overseeing the policies that either safeguard or endanger these vulnerable populations. Her track record—marked by hostility toward diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that promote fairness and ensure civil rights for protected classes, as well as her dismissal of systemic inequalities—suggests that she would fail to uphold the fundamental duty of protecting *all* students. The Committee must recognize that appointing a leader who does not prioritize student safety will not only fail survivors but all also contribute to a culture where perpetrators are shielded from accountability, further exacerbating the crisis of campus sexual violence and promoting the dire consequences to students’ education, detailed above.

Given these significant concerns, we urge the HELP Committee to reject Linda McMahon’s nomination. The U.S. Department of Education must be led by someone who exemplifies integrity, supports all students, and possesses the necessary qualifications and experience to strengthen our educational system. Ms. McMahon does not meet these standards. We call for full

¹⁹<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4777608/>

²⁰<https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Know-Your-IX-2021-Cost-of-Reporting.pdf>

²¹<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6311089/#:~:text=We%20found%20that%20the%20experience,the%20end%20of%20that%20semester.>

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accountability and a commitment to placing the safety and equitable treatment of students above all else.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

End Rape On Campus, joined by:

Gricelda	AB
Alexandra	Abreu
Winter	Adair
Sarah	Adams
Bernardo	Alayza Mujica
Dawn	Albanese
Chris	Albers
Lauren	Allen
Maeve	Allen
Nathan	Allen
Erika	Alonso
Claire	Amabile
Arshad	Ameen
Margaret	Andem
Ashley	Anderson
Matthew	Anderson
Gary	Andrews
Patricia	Anecki
JL	Angell
Rebecca	Araten
Rosalind	Arch

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Sylvana	Arguello
Kelsey	Arias
Lara	Armstrong
Janine	Ashe
XAkk G.	Asphodel
Patricia	Auer
Teresa	Ayers
Molly	B
Susan	Babbitt
Andrew	Babij
Joni	Baca
Nissa	Baker
Sharon	Baker
Tekita	Bankhead
Katie	Barkley
Rachel	Barkley
Aisha	Barnes
Janet	Bartos
Elisa	Batista
Leslie	Baunach
Lynn	Baus
mary	Baville
Elaina	Behounek
Frank	Belcastro
Lois	Belosi
Sherin	BelSummer
Destiny	Beltran
Nick	Berezansky
Adrian	Bergeron

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Serena	Bergstrom
Rose	Berkman
E	Berkson
D'Shan	Berry
Vedanti	Bhargava
Nittany	Biggs
Theresa	Bivaletz
Patricia	Blackwell-Marchant
Emily	Blank
Bonnie	Blitzstein
Rachel	Blume
Stephen	Bogart
Charles	Bogle
Ruth	Boice
Alexandra	Bollella
Michael	Bordenavr
Alyssa	Borrero
Alyssa	Borrero
Vic	Bostock
Allison	Bozyk
Lorraine	Brabham
Stephen	Brace
Benoit	Braconnier
Kathy	Bradley
Michael	Brandes
JENNIFER	Brandon
Holly	Brannon
Lisa	Brennan
Timothy	Bretschneider

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Nathan	Brewer
Mary	Bristow
Ashley	Broadwater
Georgia	Broitman
Brittany	Brown
Ingrid	Brown
Ken	Brucker
Sue	Brumm
Emily	Bruno
Teri	Bryant
Victoria	Bryant
Beverly	Bullock
Latasha	Burbank
Liza	Burby
Liza	Burby
Amanda	Burdick
Kelsy	Burke
Kathryn	Burns
Don	Bush
Ray	Cage
Sam	Campos
Amy	Cannava
Nancy Chi	Cantalupo
Mark	Cappetta
Sarah	Carew
Nora	Carlson
d	carr
Gina	Carreno-Lukasik
Stephen	Carrillo

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Anissa	Cartagena
Emilee	Cassady-Goad
Susan	Castelli-Hill
Alicia	Cerquone
Kaitlin	Chakoian
LIZ	CHAPA
stacie	Charlebois
Delilah	Chavez
Susan	Chenelle
Jane	Chischilly
Hannah	Chosid
Nichelle	Cieri
Ashley	Cinalli-Mathews
Alice	Ciuffo
Shannon	Clarkson
Natalie	Claus
Chelsea	Cleary
Katie	Clonan-Roy
Candice	Coats
Howard	Cohen
Wendi	Cohen
David	Coleman
Sarah	Colomé
Michela	Colosimo
Courtney	Cook
Nancy	Cook
Bridget	Copes
Malvina	Cordoba
Lucy	Costa

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Anna	Cowen
Shirley	
Resnick	Crenshaw
Jessica	Cresseveur
Hannah	Cronic
Kerri	Crooks
Jennifer	Cross
Latisha	Crubaugh
Ann Marie	Cunningham
Kim	Curran
A	D
Sarah	D
Laci	Dale
Cassandra	Dana
katherine	dander
Eth	Darlington
Kathleen	Darrah
Maggie	Davidson
Courtney	Davis
Ellen	Davis
Liz	Davis
Deborah	De Salvo
Cindi	Dean
Glen	Deardorff
Kayla	DeCant
Jeffrey	DeCristofaro
Mitzi	Deitch
Jesenia	Deleon
Patricia	DeLuca

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Laura	Dement
James	Deshotels
Edward	Desmarais
Tracy	DeTomasi
Sarah	Diamond
Sarah	Diaz
Kirby	Dick
Susan	Dickerson
Dan	DiLeva
Christi	Dillon
Simone	Dixon
Janice	Dlugosz
Lenzi	Dodgen
Victoria	Dolan
George	Dowdall
JoNell	Doyle
Suzanne	Drake
Heather-Heth	Drees
Sara	Drischler
Risa	Dubow
Miriam	Dunbar
Elmo	Dunn
Tithi	Dutta Roy
Cheryl	Dzubak
Chloe	Eaglowksi
Amber	Eby
Madison	Edwards
Julie	Ehrnstein
Paige	Eichkorn

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Michael	Eisenberg
Paul	Eisenberg
Kelly	El ways
Ashley	Eller
Lexie	Elliott
Amy	Ellis
Alyssa	Elston
Carolyn	Engel
I.	Engle
Kathryn	English
R.K. and Linda	Entrekin
Lynda	Espana
Hanna	Estes
Julia	Ettere
Gabrielle	Falco
Tracey	Falla
Jen	Farnsworth
Ashley	Farreny
Martha	Fergus
Melanie	Figueroa
Jamie	File
Suzann	Finch
Robert	Fingerman
William	Flack
Kerry	Flory
Cecilia	Fogarty
Allison	Foley
Lindsay	Foley
Judith	Ford

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Stephanie C.	Fox
Cathy	Foxhoven
Allison	Fradkin
Lillian	Frame
Marianne	Frapwell
Laura	Freeman
Isabel	Friberg
Arthur	Friedman
Nancy	Friel
Rolf	Friis
Joyce	Frohn
Andi	G
Mary	Gaffney
Loren	Galese
Maria	Gallagher
Daniel	Gallimore
Nora	Gallo
Elizabeth	Galoozis
Sharon	Galt
Phallen	Gaskin
Whitney	Gerstner
Paul	Ghenoiu
Robert	Gibb
Pamela	Gibberman
Susan	Gibson
Lynne	Glaeske
Andrea	Glod
Barbara	Goldberg
Brett	Goldberg

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Melissa	Goldsmith
Jennifer	Gomez
Anita	Goncalves
Nicole	Gonzalez
David	Green
James	Green
Katherine	Greenstein
Susanne	Groenendaal
Nona	Gronert
Richard	Guevara
Rachel	Gulick
Peter	Gunther
Christopher	Gutierrez
Katelyn	Haas-Conrad
Iris	Haik
Philip	Halikias
Janice	Hallman
Michael	Halloran
T	Hamboyan Harrison
Chuck	Hamilton
Arden	Hander
Kristen	Hanley Cardozo
Susan	Hanlon
Julie	Hansen
David	Hardee
Carol	Harder
Barbara	Harper
Leslie	Harper
Michael	Harrington

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Freya	Harris
Shelley	Harris
Zoe	Harris
Sarah	Haviland
Lindsay	Hawthorne
Susan	Heath
Evangelia	Hecht
John	Heigl
Kristina	Heiks
Amy	Henry
Ryan	Hensley
Laura	Hewey
T	Higgins
Claudia	Hinz
Jacquelyn	Hippe
Jacqy	Hippe
Maya	Hislop
Jennie	Ho
Judith M.	Hofflund
Felicity	Hohenshelt
Kathryn	Holland
Ellen	Homsey
Phillip	Hope
Martin	Horwitz
Jennifer	Hout
Mary	Howe-Grant
Linda	Howie
Eric	Huang
Edward	Hubbard

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Kaity	Huber
Sonya	Huber
Annelise	Hughes
Howard	Hunt
Rehana	Huq
Arianna	Illa
Andrea	Illiano
Elizabeth	Ishmael
Lucy	Isiayei
Julie	Iverson
Brandy	Jacobs
Emily	Jarvis
Stella	Jarvis
Brian	Jeffery
Terry	Jess
Mary	Johannsen
Erin	Johnson
Kenyora	Johnson
Shari	Johnson
Brian	Jones
Lorraine	Jones
Rosemary	Jones
Eliza	Jorn
Debra	Josiger-Holzem
Brandon	Juhl
William	Kandle
Caroline	Kangas
Daniel	Kanter
Isabelle	Kanz

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Mindy	Kates
Tracey	Katsouros
Alix	Keast
Jenny	Keene
Kaile	Kefi
Nicholas	Kellerhals
Michael	Kemper
Sally	Kenney
Meredith	Kent-Berman
Tara	Kerr
Mha Atma S	Khalsa
Farah	Khan
Erin	Kidd
Hyo Eun	Kim
Erin	King
Erica	Klein-Meisenhelter
Ava	Knapp
Lauren	Kofsky
Ellen	Koivisto
Karen	Kong
Laurel	Kornfeld
Kate	Kostal
Jordan	Kotler
AK	Krauss
Evan	Krichevsky
Beverly	Kubachka
Maria	Kumro
Sandra	Lambert
Stephanie	LaMonaca

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Lynn C.	Lang
Jennifer	Langdon
Zoe	Larkey
Elaine	LaRosa
Mark	Latiker
David	Lavender
Pamela A	Lawrence
Lynette	Lazarus
Jesi	Leal
Kenneth	Lederman
Tara	Lee
Tsee	Lee
Tim	Lennon
Rho	Levi
Beth	Levin
S B	Libson
McKenzie	Liegibel
Lisa	Lim
Christopher	Lish
Abbi	Littell
Heidi	Lockwood
Lisa	Lohse-Miranda
Judith	Love
Jim	Loveland
Nita	Lowrey
Sue Ellen	Lupien
Joyce	Lynch
Gianna	M
Michelle	Maas

END RAPE ON CAMPUS

Angelo	Madrigale
Millie	Magner
John	Malan
Michelle	Maloney
Patrick	Maloney
Elizabeth	Malousek
Jeff	Mann
Alec	Marentic
Sandra	Marfield
Lee	Margulies
John	Markowitz
Marian	Martin
Rachel Martin	Martin
Rebecca	Martin
Cassandra	Marzke
Shannon	Masden
Tracy	Matheson
Jennifer	Mathews
Juliann	Mathis
Stephen	Mattice
Krista	Maughan
Margaret C.	Maurer
Elira	Mavraj
Casee	Maxfield
Vincenza	Mazzeo
Jenae	McCall
Karen	McCaw
Katherine	McChurch
Tony	McClain

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Daviann	McClurg
Mike	McCool
Clair	McCready
Valli	McDougle
Anna	McGee
Katherine	McGee
Melissa	McGraw
Caephren	McKenna
Molly	McLean
Catherine	McNamara
Kirsti	McNeece
Diana	Mercado
Allie	Merfeld
Jamie	Merold
Katrina	Messenger
Len	Messina
Carl	Meyer
Melissa	Meyer
Christie	Miksys
Dorothy	Miller
Michele	Millhouse
Omny	Miranda Martone
Beverly	Mitchell
Michelle	Mitchell
Ron	Mittan
Megan	Mizanty
Audrey	Momoh
Aspen	Monsma
Sydney	Moos

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Priscilla	Moreno
Hannah	Morris
Lauren	Morton
Lynn	Mortoro
Stephanie	Mory
Sayedah	Mosavi
Ebony	Moses
Melissa	Mouldin
Lauren	Muqattash
Lauren	Murdock
Riley	Murphy
Katie	Muth
Mark	Myers
Oksana	Mykhaylyk
Yuko	Nakanishi
S.	Nam
Etan	Nasreddin-Longo
Hope	Nastri
Margaret	Nelson
Lisa	Newman
Courtney	Ng
Phuong Thao	Nguyen
Ambrey	Nichols
Jennie	O'Donaghue
Girasol	O'Neill
Kaitlynn	Oaks
Ada	Oates
Amy	Oates
Erica	Oatman

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Gulshan	Oomerjee
Susan	Ostlie
Ellen	Ostrow
Dr. Michael	Paff
Bianca	Palmisano
Jonathan	Pamplin
Laura	Paone
Susan	Pappalardo
Kirk	Pappan
Rachael	Pappano
Emily	Parsons
Nola	Pastor
Sarayfah	Patridge
Carmen	Paul
Wendy	Peale
Jasmine	Pease
Lisa	Pena Humes
Julia	Pennick
Jackie	Perez
Janet	Peterson
Kayla	Petroski
Nancy	Phelps
Justin	Philipps
Wynn	Phillips
Paulina	Pizarro
Charles	Plopper
Lindsay	Pluger
Jason	Pohlman
Ellen	Poist

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Tony	Poland
Bret	Polish
Arun Raja	Pookote
Precious	Porras
Diana	Posner
Pollie	Price
Jennifer	Prichard
Susan	Pulido
Aimee	Puschkin
Erika	Quinde
Ashley	Quirk
Megan	Radavich
Holly	Ramella
Alyssa	Ramirez
Sasa	Ramos
Leilani	Rania Ganser
Tiffany	Rapplean
Emily	Ratkowiak
Angela	Rehling
Laura	Reid
Kay	Reinfried
Kristin	Rennels
Bruce	Revesz
Chey	Richmond
Linda	Riedeburg
Derrick	Riley
Chris	Ringgold
Sydney	Roberts
Deanna	Robertson

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Cheryl	Robison
Peggy	Rogers
Jessica	Rollins
Haley	Roma
nora	Roman
Frances	Romano
Tony	Romero
RoseMaria	Root
Amelia	Rosen
Yael	Rosenstock
Sarah	Rosenthal
Juliana	Roth
Richard	Rothstein
Ashley	Rubin
Rachel	Ruckart
Cathy	Rupp
P	S
Margaret	Sachs
Olivia	Sager
Dianne	Saichek
Mark	Salamon
Mark	Salamon
Sebastien	Sanchez
Kate	Sanderson
Shannon	Santana
Maureen	Saval
Erin	Saylor
Mary Ellen	Schaid
Carol	Scher

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Brian	Schill
Paul	Schmalzer
Mark	Schmidt
Sara	Schmidt
Chris	Scholl
Richard	Schulte
Karyn	Schultz
Jean	Schwinberg
Edward	Scott
Michael	Seager
Joshua	Seff
Ellen	Segal
Greg	Sells
Elizabeth	Seltzer
Rob	Seltzer
Michael	Sepesy
Elliott	Sernel
Annie	Seymour
Richard	Shannahan
Claudia	Shapiro
Ellene	Shapiro
Charles	Sharpe
Mitchell	Shaver
Eli	Shear-Baggish
Deborah	Sheinman
Sophie	Shelb
BC	Shelby
Joyce	Short
Sara	Siggelkow

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Ana Beatriz	Silva
Kimberly	Simmons
John	Simons
Irv	Simpkins
Andrea	Singmaster
Jon	Slenk
Gina	Smart
Candi	Smiley
Jaszmene	Smith
Joe	Smith
Paeton	Smith-Hiebert
Kelly	Smock
Dylan	Snyder
Don	Somsky
Lindsay	Spaulding
Jen	Spencer
Lizzy	Springer
Andrea	Stamey
Karen	Stamm
Nancy	Stamm
Edh	Stanley
Jack	Stansfield
Megan	Staudenraus
Andrea	Stauffer
Alex	Stavis
Mark	Steckloff
Jennifer	Steffen
Ruth	Steger
Tuth	Steger

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Lisa	Steiner
Nan	Stevenson
John	Stofko
Charleen	Stelke
Maria	Studer
Jessica	Sturm
P. R.	Sturm
Kristin	Surber
Courtney	Sutton
Caroline	Swaller
Eugene	Swenson
Wanda	Synnestvedt
Erin	Tarabini
Katherine	Taylor
Kristie	Thomas
Cassidy	Thompson
Cynthia	Thompson
Don	Thompson
Catherine	Tietjen
Carly	Tinkler
Catherine	Titzer
Janis	Todd
Adam	Torson
Krista	Townsend
Sheila	Tran
Shawn	Troxell
Kerri	True-Funk
Justin	Truong
Ashlee	Turner

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Kasey	Umland
Matthew	Unangst
Francesca	Vaccaro
Claire	Valian
Alicia	Vance Aguiar
Stephanie	Vares
Stephanie	Vary
Reah	Vasilakopoulos
Lindsey	Vernick
Sarah	Veronda
Colleen	Vesely
Shivali	Vishwakarma
John	Voegeli
Steven	Vogel
Susan	Vogt
Susan	von Schmach
Liz	W
Brian	Waak
Jennifer	Wagman
Lindsey	Wagner
Pamela	Wall
Kevin	Walsh
Jessie	Wang
Christopher	Ware
Esther	Warkov
Carl	Warner
Ashley	Watkins-Maagad
Harold	Watson
Molly	Weiler

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Andrew	Weinberger, MD
Lynne	Weiske
Lynne	Weiske
Lolita	Welch
William	Welkowitz
Heather	Wendel
Ms.	Wesley
Doug	West
Kaitlyn	Weston
Kelsey	Wexler
Cassandra	White
J W	White
Madeline	Wigon
Melissa	Wilkerson
Ginna	Wilkerson
MaryJo	Wilkins
Daniel	Wilkinson
Rachael	Williams
Angie	Williams
Les	Williamson
Pa	Wills
Dallas	Windham
Marsha	Wiseltier
Susan	Wismar
Erin	Wood
Megan	Woodfield
Rocquelle	Woods
Kiley	Woods
Krysta	Workman

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Natasha	Yakovleva
Nancy	Yarosis
Zoe	Zagorski
Andrea	Zeddies
Eugene	Zenzen
Linda	Ziebarth
Russ	Ziegler
Kathleen	Zoll



NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

January 31, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chair
 Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee
 Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building,
 Washington, DC, 20510

RE: Opposition to the Nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education

Dear Chairman Cassidy:

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) is devoted to preventing sexual violence and exploitation informed by survivors of such abuse. Much of our work requires that we confront the relentless normalization of sexual abuse and exploitation which unfolds regularly within the private and public sectors of American life. Today, we are compelled to write to you about a particularly flagrant example of such normalization—the nomination of Linda McMahon to the position of Secretary of the United States Department of Education.

Mrs. McMahon cofounded Titan Sports with her husband Vince McMahon in 1980; the company later became the World Wrestling Federation and is now known as World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). She reportedly became the business' president in 1993, and its CEO in 1997, a position which she retained until her resignation in 2009. **Thus, the events and allegations described below, occurred on her watch as either co-founder or an executive of WWE.**

WWE requires little introduction. It's influence on American popular culture is widely known. Its weekly cable television programs *Prime Time Wrestling*, *Monday Night Raw*, and *Smack Down!*, as well as *WrestleMania* events propelled professional wrestling "entertainment" into the cultural mainstream and gave rise to a multi-billion-dollar industry.

While WWE has been plagued with a litany of scandals and allegations, our concerns center on the following:

- 1) Allegations of systemic sexual exploitation of boys occurring at WWE events during the 1980s and 1990s
- 2) Allegations of a business culture that tolerated systemic sexual harassment and exploitation of male and female WWE employees by WWE staff, including Vince McMahon
- 3) WWE's blatant glorification of a toxic mix of violence, sexism, sexual objectification, sexual exploitation, and public humiliation.

1. “Ring Boy” Sexual Abuse Allegations

In October 2024, Mrs. McMahon, Vince McMahon, and WWE were named as defendants in a lawsuit brought by five men who allege that during the 1980s, when they were teenage boys, they were recruited, groomed, and sexually abused by WWE ring crew chief and ring announcer Mel Phillips.¹ According to the complaint, Phillips purposefully targeted boys from broken homes, recruiting them to do errands and assist with set up and take down of wrestling rings with promises of opportunities to meet famous wrestlers and attend wrestling events. Phillips’ sexual abuse of as many as 10 victims was confirmed by the FBI. One victim committed suicide in 2021.² The complaint alleges that Phillips’ sexual abuse of the boys—as well as the sexual abuse of boys and WWE employees by other WWE employees—was well known within WWE, that the McMahon’s failed to protect them and “knowingly fostered and allowed a culture of sexual misconduct to permeate the WWE.”³ The full complaint filed by the John Does is available online.⁴

2. WWE’s Business Culture of Sexual Harassment and Exploitation of Female and Male Employees

In addition to the sexual abuse of boys, there is abundant evidence of a WWE business culture that tolerated sexual harassment and exploitation of its male and female employees by other WWE staff, including by its executives. For instance, former WWE employees have alleged “casting couch” demands (i.e. sexual favors in return for jobs, money, and promotions) and former wrestlers (both men and women) have reported experiencing sexual assaults by members of WWE management.⁵

Illustrative of WWE’s culture of sexual harassment and exploitation, the following list briefly reviews *some* of the allegations involving WWE employees and/or its cofounder Vince McMahon during the period that Linda McMahon was a top executive within the organization.

- 1) Rena Marlette-Lesnar (WWE wrestler 1996 – 1999; 2003 – 2004), a.k.a. “Sable,” sued WWE in a complaint which alleged that men “accidentally” walked into the women’s locker room, that a peephole had been cut into a wall, the occurrence of “big nipple contests,” and other harassment.⁶
- 2) Two flight attendants sued WWE in 2004 for incidences of sexual assault and harassment which occurred on a WWE chartered flight from the UK to the US in 2002. Among the incidents occurring during the flight, wrestler Ric Flair stripped off his clothes, with the exception of a jeweled cape,⁷ and “paraded up and down the aisle doing his trademark strut and ‘Who!’”⁸ He flashed his penis and grabbed two attendants’ hands forcing them to touch his crotch.⁹
- 3) In a sworn statement by Ashley Massaro (WWE wrestler from 2005–2008) released by her attorneys in 2024 (following new allegations of sexual impropriety by Vincent McMahon), Massaro alleged that she had witnessed Vince McMahon molesting other female wrestlers, and that because she refused Vince McMahon’s sexual advances he intentionally sought to ruin her career.¹⁰ Prior to her death by apparent suicide in 2019, Ms. Massaro had also alleged that in 2006, while on a WWE tour in the Middle

East, she was raped by members of the US military and that WWE covered up the incident to avoid disrupting its relationship with U.S. Armed Forces.¹¹

- 4) In 2006, after a sexual relationship with a former WWE manager, Vince McMahon paid \$1 million in hush-money; in 2008, following his sending unsolicited naked photos of himself to a WWE contractor and harassing her on the job, McMahon paid approximately another \$1 million in a non-disclosure settlement.¹²

Other accusations have been made, but we believe these incidents provide sufficient “smoke” signaling a corporate culture at WWE that tolerated sexual harassment.

3. WWE’s Blatant Glorification of Violence, Sexism, Sexual Objectification, Sexual Exploitation, and Public Humiliation

WWE long choreographed a spectacle of violence including, “Weapons used in attacks include fists, legs, chairs, hammers, bats, canes, whips, thumb tacks, chains, guitars, trash cans, Kendo sticks, branding irons, tasers, cars, trucks, forklifts, fire, and barbed wire, among other objects.”¹³

WWE began infusing its wrestling events with high levels of sexual titillation, in the late 1990s. It is not an overstatement to say that portions of the wrestling matches were a strip show in which women wore or stripped down to pasties, G-strings, bikinis, lingerie, fetishized costumes, or in some cases were topless. These stripclub-esque events were attended by huge audiences that included minor children and were aired nationally on cable television.

Violent, debased, sexist, sexually objectifying, and humiliating acts occurred during WWE wrestling events. The following descriptions provide highlights of some of the well-known routine features of WWE events, as well as some of the debauched extremes to which plot lines descended.

1. **Sexualized female wrestling:** So-called evening gown matches, between female wrestlers in which one wrestler loses by being stripped of her dress down to her bra and panties. These were sometimes staged in pools. In addition, there were bikini matches, swimsuit matches, and matches in which women wrestled in chocolate pudding.
2. **Toplessness:** Planned toplessness involving female wrestlers including Stacy Carter (Miss Kitty/The Kat) in both 1999 and 2000, Mae Young (2000), Dawn Marie Psaltis (2003).
3. **Women stripped as outcome of matches:** The Holiday Topless Top Rope Match (1999) was an event in which two women representing male wrestlers were instructed to take off an article of clothing each time the wrestler they represented was thrown over the top rope and touched the floor, the match to end when one woman was topless. The women were told in front of the audience “Your jobs on are the line” if they did not remove their clothes.¹⁴
4. **Normalization of sexual exploitation:** Charles Wright played the WWE wrestling character “the Godfather”—a pimp who was accompanied into the ring by his “hos.” “Before each of his matches the Godfather typically did two things. First, he enjoined

the audience to chant with him 'PIMPING AIN'T EASY,' and then he offered his opponent the choice of one of his hos in return for not fighting. Occasionally, an opponent would take one (or more) of the women and withdraw from the ring."¹⁵

5. **Abduction and Satanic marriage:** In another WWE storyline, Mark Calaway "the Undertaker" and leader of "the Ministry of Darkness" abducted Stephanie McMahon (daughter of Linda and Vince McMahon), had her tied to a huge symbol used as the Undertaker's trademark, brought her screaming into a wrestling ring where she remained tied up and suspended in the ring for the performance of a forced marriage.
6. **Simulated live sex:** In connection with the 2006 WWE Championship, a bed was brought into a wrestling ring and Adam Copeland ("Edge"), the championship winner, "celebrated" by engaging in what was staged to appear as live sex under covers with Amy Dumas ("Lita"), who was partially exposed during the scene.
7. **"Kiss My A** Club":** Beginning in 2001, Vince McMahon required that certain wrestlers—his employees—literally kiss his bared buttocks while in the wrestling ring in front of audiences. These scenes were intended to humiliate the wrestler and to signify loyalty to McMahon. In some cases, these scenes involved shoving a person's face into McMahon's butt cheeks, including that of his son, Shane McMahon. In at least one instance, the man kissing McMahon's buttocks was told to "Pucker up, bitch!"¹⁶ In a particularly well-known incident, involving a flip of the usual script, McMahon had his face shoved and held in the buttocks of wrestler Solofa Fatu, Jr., "Rikishi," by Dwayne Johnson, "The Rock."
8. **Necrophilia:** In an especially perverse storyline, wrestler Paul Levesque, "Triple H," disguised as Glenn Jacobs' "Kane" character, visits a casket containing the corpse of "Katie Vick" (a mannequin). He gropes her breasts, removes her underwear and sniffs it, undresses, and gets into a casket where he has sex with her corpse. He holds up what seems to be a human brain and states, "I screwed your brains out!"¹⁷
9. **Sexist degradation and sexual humiliation:** In one WWE storyline,¹⁸ while in a wrestling ring Vince McMahon dumped what looked like sewage on Trish Stratus, who was portrayed as Vince McMahon's mistress. The following week, Ms. Stratus pleaded for forgiveness for having attempted to gain power within his wrestling enterprise. Vince McMahon then demanded that to prove her sincerity she get on her hands and knees and bark like a dog, which Ms. Stratus did in front of an audience of thousands. Following this humiliation, McMahon said, "I've seen you on all fours before, they haven't." He then commands Ms. Stratus to "Take your clothes off!" She strips to her bra and panties. McMahon then commands, "Take your bra off and take it off now!" She begins to take her bra off, but then he relents and covers her with his jacket. Trish later says, "Mr. McMahon, not even you know how far I would degrade myself for the right cause." As Ms. Stratus leaves the ring and walks out of the arena McMahon says:

[E]veryone in this arena is a lot like Trish. See, just think about it. You see because most everybody here in the metropolitan area in one way or the other, here in Washington DC, works for the government, which means that you're real, real close to politics which means, you're no different than Trish. You're just about this far [holding his fingers about two inches apart] from prostitution yourself.

We note with sadness that Linda McMahon, in her roles as president and CEO of WWE, chose not to intervene in or halt these degrading and depraved plotlines and their "raw" sexual titillation. Not only did she not intervene, in some cases she took part, playing a humiliated and powerless wife who watched in a drugged stupor from a wheelchair in 2001 as her husband publicly violated their marriage. Other WWE stories also involved depictions of interfamilial violence among the McMahons in which Linda McMahon struck her adult daughter Stephanie, was struck by her daughter, and verbally assaulted by her son. **In sum, Linda McMahon's career was dedicated to turning the sport of wrestling into a spectacle of violence and sexual objectification and to profiting from it, not to the building of the minds and characters of our country's children.**

Conclusion

The nomination of Linda McMahon to the position of Secretary of the Department of Education is an affront to decency and to the wellbeing of America's children. No individual who has been at the helm of a business which has exposed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of minors to a toxic cocktail of unrelenting violence and sex has any business overseeing their public education. No individual who has tolerated a culture of sexual abuse and harassment within his or her business can be trusted to protect American's children from harm. We therefore call on you to stand with America's children and reject Mrs. McMahon's nomination as Secretary of the Department of Education.

Sincerely,



Marcel Van der Watt, Ph.D.
President



Lisa Thompson
Vice President, NCOSE
Research Institute

- ¹ Jordan Mendoza, "Negligence Lawsuit Filed against WWE, Vince McMahon by 'Ring Boys' Who Allege Sexual Abuse," *USA Today*, October 23, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/2024/10/23/ww-ring-boys-sexual-abuse-negligence-lawsuit-vince-mcmahon-linda-tko/75814539007/> (accessed December 21, 2024).
- ² *John Doe 1-5 v. World Wrestling Entertainment, LLC, Vincent K. McMahon, Linda McMahon, and TKO Group Holdings, Inc.*, No. C-03-CV-24-004019, CC for Baltimore County, MD, at 33, October 23, 2024, <https://dicellolevitt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Date-Stamped-Does-1-5-v.-WWE-et-al.-Complaint-10.23.2024.pdf> (accessed December 21, 2024).
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ <https://dicellolevitt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Date-Stamped-Does-1-5-v.-WWE-et-al.-Complaint-10.23.2024.pdf>
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ David Bixenspan, "How Nicole Bass Was Slut-Shamed by WWE During Her Sexual Harassment Lawsuit," *Deadspin*, December 14, 2017, <https://deadspin.com/how-nicole-bass-was-slut-shamed-by-wwe-during-her-sexua-1821245688/> (accessed December 14, 2024).
- ⁷ Alred Konowa, "Ric Flair; Sex & Steroids in Flight: 10 Years after WWE's Plane Ride from Hell," *BleacherReport.com*, May 5, 2012, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1173376-ric-flair-sex-steroids-in-flight-10-years-after-wwes-plane-ride-from-hell> (accessed December 21, 2024).
- ⁸ Tom Fordy, "Booze, Firings, Lawsuits: Inside WWE's 'Flight from Hell'" *New York Post*, June 23, 2017, <https://nypost.com/2017/06/23/booze-firings-lawsuits-inside-wwes-flight-from-hell/> (accessed December 21, 2024).
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Bill Pritchard, "Ashley Massaro Accused Vince McMahon of Sexually Preying on Talent in Previously Unreleased Statement," *Wrestle Zone*, February 4, 2024, <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/ashley-massaro-accused-vince-mcmahon-155104632.html> (accessed December 21, 2024).
- ¹¹ Sean Reuter, "Friend of Ashley Massaro Corroborates Rape Allegation, Says Stephanie McMahon Was Involved in WWE Cover Up," *Cagesideseats.com*, February 16, 2024, <https://www.cagesideseats.com/ww/2024/2/16/24075052/ashley-massaro-friend-corroborates-rape-allegation-stephanie-mcmahon-involved-ww-cover-up>.
- ¹² Chris Bumbaca, "Report: WWE's Vince McMahon Paid \$12 Million to Four Women, Used NDAs to Hush Sexual Misconduct Allegations," *USA Today*, July 8, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/media/2022/07/08/ww-vince-mcmahon-hush-monday-nda-affairs/10016621002/> (accessed December 21, 2024).
- ¹³ Brendan Maguire, "American Professional Wrestling: Evolution, Content, and Popular Appeal," *Sociological Spectrum* 25 (2005): 161, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02732170590883960>.
- ¹⁴ Note: One of the removed her bra but was shielded from the view of the audience.
- ¹⁵ Maguire, *ibid.*, 161-162.
- ¹⁶ Art O'Donnell, "The Vince McMahon Kiss My Ass Club," *Wrestlercrap.com*, n.d., <https://www.wrestlercrap.com/inductions/kiss-my-ass-club/> (accessed December 23, 2024).
- ¹⁷ RD Reynolds, "Katie Vick: The Saga of 2002 Gooker Award Winner," n.d., <https://www.wrestlercrap.com/inductions/katie-vick/> (accessed December 23, 2024).
- ¹⁸ Art O'Donnell, "Trish Stratus Barks Like a Dog," *Wrestlercrap.com*, n.d., <https://www.wrestlercrap.com/inductions/trish-stratus-barks-like-a-dog/> (accessed December 23, 2024).



Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Dear Senators of the HELP Committee,

The National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA) has a long history of advocating for the education and well-being of every child. As the oldest and largest child advocacy association in America, with a presence in every state and millions of members across the country, we are united in our commitment to the well-being and educational success of all children. While National PTA does not endorse or oppose presidential nominees, we do have concerns regarding several positions of U.S. Secretary of Education designee, Linda McMahon, and wanted to share them with you today as a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) overseeing the nomination hearing tomorrow.

National PTA has long stood for high quality public education, with high standards and accountability and seeks to ensure robust funding for public education at all levels of government. We know that increased public school funding, when sustained over time, increases high school graduation rates and student test scores. We oppose efforts to undermine public education by diverting taxpayer funds to any private school choice system—vouchers, tax credits or deductions. Repeated studies of voucher programs across the country show that vouchers result in worse test scores for students. Moreover, public dollars carry the responsibility for providing public access, governance and accountability, and our association strongly believes public dollars must remain invested in public schools for the benefit of all students and the future of our nation. We encourage you to review:

- [Public School Choice](#), National PTA Position Statement
- [Public Charter Schools](#), National PTA Position Statement

We are also concerned about recent discussions regarding potential future efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education. Our nation's public schools serve over 80% of our nation's students, and programs and funding streams administered by the U.S. Department of Education—including disbursement of Title I and Title II funding, grants through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Office of Civil Rights and the Statewide Family Engagement Centers program—serve students and families most in need of vital supports across the country. These programs are all essential to improving academic outcomes and student well-being and cannot be dismantled or reallocated without having devastating impacts on the children, families and schools they serve.

As a national leader, we encourage you to champion public schools and the families and children served by them across the country, such as outlined in the [recently introduced H. Res. 94 by Representative Suzanne Bonamici](#) asserting Congress' commitment to protecting the U.S. Department of Education, emphasizing its role for families, children, and schools and the importance of maintaining funding streams like IDEA and Title I that are managed by the Department.



Finally, we encourage you to read our association's newly released [Public Policy Priorities for 2025-2027](#), which detail additional topics of particular importance to our members right now.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact our Director of Government Affairs, Kate Clabaugh, at kclabaugh@PTA.org if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you during the 119th Congress and hearing from Ms. McMahon during her confirmation hearing on many important issues affecting children, families, their education and well-being, including her vision for how the Department will continue to support the vital work of public schools and serve students and families most in need of vital supports across the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Yvonne Johnson'.

Yvonne Johnson
President
National PTA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nathan R. Monell'.

Nathan R. Monell, CAE
Executive Director
National PTA

February 12, 2025

Senator John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chairman
Senate Health, Education Labor &
Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education Labor &
Pensions Committee
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Letter in Opposition to the Confirmation of Linda M. McMahon as Secretary of
Education

Dear Leaders Thune and Schumer, Chairman Cassidy, and Ranking Member Sanders:

This letter expresses the Legal Defense Fund's (LDF) strong opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Linda M. McMahon as Secretary of the Department of Education (ED). ED plays a crucial role in advancing policies and practices that eliminate racial disparities and strengthen state and local compliance with federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To fulfil the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which LDF litigated and won, our organization continues to fight for the rights of Black students to receive high quality, equitable educational opportunities. The person holding the title of Secretary must lead the agency in upholding its mission, safeguarding civil rights protections, and ensuring that all students are free from discrimination and have equal access to a quality education. Instead, Ms. McMahon's acquiescence to the planned destruction of the ED, extremist views toward education policy, extraordinary lack of experience, and efforts to undermine democracy at the America First Policy Institute (AFPI), make her wholly unfit to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Education.

1. Ms. McMahon's Acquiescence to the Planned Destruction of the Education Department

If confirmed, Ms. McMahon will work to severely undermine our public education system by participating in the dismantling of the ED. State and local school districts play an important role in establishing academic standards, managing teachers' certification process, and determining students' graduation requirements. But we recognize that state and local school districts work in tandem with federal agencies such as ED to ensure consistency in quality education throughout the country. This "check and balance" system of education allows ED to provide funding, set broad policy guidelines, and enforce civil rights laws. Ms. McMahon supports taking oversight authority away from the federal government and empowering states and local school districts to enact policies related to public education with few if any checks.¹ There have been proposals to abolish or reassign, and therefore destabilize, ED's work to protect millions of students from discrimination. President Trump has publicly stated that he wants Ms. McMahon to "put herself out of a job," making clear his intent that he wants Ms. McMahon to fulfil his desire to effectively dismantle the Department of Education absent required congressional authorization and to the detriment of the 50 million students who rely on its protections.² In using Ms. McMahon to achieve this objective, President Trump will be taking a page directly from the Project 2025 playbook, which calls for the federal government to abolish ED, the agency charged with enforcing civil rights in education, distributing federal funding, and administering programs to address inequities in education access and participation.³

If confirmed, Ms. McMahon's efforts would negatively impact a host of critically needed programs and functions of ED. ED is responsible for overseeing elementary and secondary programs that span across nearly 18,200 school districts and over 50 million students attending roughly 98,000 public schools and 32,000 private schools.⁴ ED also has programs that provide grant, loan, and work-study assistance to millions of postsecondary students.⁵

¹ See *America First Policy Institute Presents America First Nominees: Linda McMahon Secretary of the Department of Education*, [file:///C:/Users/mharris/Downloads/America First Nominees-Linda-McMahon-FINAL-REVIEW.pdf](file:///C:/Users/mharris/Downloads/America%20First%20Nominees-Linda-McMahon-FINAL-REVIEW.pdf).

² Alayna Treene et al., *Trump administration drafting executive order to initiate Department of Education's elimination*, CNN (February 4, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/04/politics/education-department-trump-executive-order/index.html>.

³ See LDF Repot: *Attack on our Power and Dignity: What Project 2025 Means for Black Communities*, Thurgood Marshall Institute (October 3, 2024), <https://tminstituteldf.org/project-2025-threats-to-education/>.

⁴ See <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/federal-role-in-education#:~:text=First%20the%20Secretary%20and%20the,solutions%20to%20difficult%20educational%20issues>.

⁵ *Id.*

Among the programs that would disproportionately affect Black students, teachers, and families, if eliminated, would be the “Head Start program” which is a federally funded program that provides early childhood education support services to low-income children.⁶ Additionally, eliminating or removing the Office of for Civil Rights (OCR), would significantly weaken federal oversight and enforcement mechanisms designed to protect students’ civil rights in schools.⁷ OCR utilizes policy enforcement tools to eliminate barriers for nearly 80 million individuals who attend federally funded schools. In 2024, OCR received nearly 23,000 complaints—37% alleged disability discrimination and 19% contained allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.⁸ Any action to dismantle or defund OCR would eliminate ED’s ability to investigate and resolve complaints of systemic oppression, harassment, and discrimination. ED should be led by a Secretary who will safeguard federal programs that benefit all students, particularly low-income students and students from marginalized communities.

2. Ms. McMahon’s Extremist Views Toward Education Policy

Ms. McMahon’s views on education policy are extreme and pose a major threat to school children. Her support for the elimination of what she refers to as “political indoctrination” in classrooms and her rejection of teaching the full truth of American history, which includes our country’s history of systemic racism and its impact on American society is more than troubling.⁹ Educating students about the effects of Jim Crow laws, segregation of schools and public transportation, grandfather clauses for voting, and the complicity of public officials in acts of intimidation against Black people is a part of American history that should be shared and studied in classrooms. Failure to teach this history sets our country on the path to repeating these harmful policies and perpetuating their effects. Furthermore, Ms. McMahon supports the privatization of schools, which studies have shown lead to further school segregation.¹⁰ Privatizing public school education significantly divests necessary funding away from public education and into private schools, denying low-income families the opportunity

⁶ See LDF Repot: *Attack on our Power and Dignity: What Project 2025 Means for Black Communities*, Thurgood Marshall Institute (October 3, 2024), <https://tminstituteldf.org/project-2025-threats-to-education/>.

⁷ See <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-dismantling-department-education-would-harm-students>.

⁸ U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Off. for C.R., *2024 Fiscal Year Annual Report 8* (2024), <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/ocr-report-president-and-secretary-of-education-2024>.

⁹ See *America First Policy Institute Presents America First Nominees: Linda McMahon Secretary of the Department of Education*, [file:///C:/Users/mharris/Downloads/America First Nominees-Linda-McMahon-FINAL-REVIEW.pdf](file:///C:/Users/mharris/Downloads/America%20First%20Nominees-Linda-McMahon-FINAL-REVIEW.pdf).

¹⁰ Chris Ford, et al., *The Racist Origins of Private School Vouchers*, *Am. Progress* (July 12, 2017), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/racist-origins-private-school-vouchers/>; Myths and Facts About School Vouchers; *Shopping for Schools or Shopping for Peers: Public Schools and Catchment Area Segregation*, 32 *J. of Educ. Pol’y* 340 (Dec. 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2016.1263363>.

to access a quality education.¹¹ This type of withdrawal of school funds will assuredly take a disproportionate toll on Black students, Latino students, and students with disabilities.

3. Ms. McMahon's Extraordinary Lack of Experience

Ms. McMahon, the former Administrator of the Small Business Administration during Trump's first presidency, is widely known for her work as a business mogul. She has limited experience leading education policy. Instead, as the co-founder of the wrestling company that's referred to as the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), her focus has been on business.¹² As WWE's CEO, she spent decades running the business operations of the company.¹³ It was not until 2009, when Ms. McMahon shifted public interest to education. She has very limited background in education or professional experience steering education policy.¹⁴ Further, while serving on the Connecticut Board of Education, several reports questioned her purported credentials in education. Following this controversy, she resigned from her Connecticut post after serving only one year. The role of Education Secretary demands someone who possesses much more in depth background in education policy and a deep understanding of public school education systems.

4. Ms. McMahon's Efforts to Undermine Democracy at AFPI

Through Ms. McMahon's leadership, following Trump's presidential loss in 2020, she co-founded a far-right conservative think tank, the American First Policy Institute (AFPI), to implement a set of policies that would threaten our democracy. AFPI is known to have drafted nearly 300 troubling executive orders, many of which are upending our system of checks and balances, violating constitutional law and harming the lives of our career workforce and their families. She has helped design dangerous staff downsizing plans and policy agendas that closely parallel Project 2025 and place public school education under threat.¹⁵ The AFPI is comprised of former Trump administration officials who spent the past several years planning for President Trump's return to office. The AFPI supports educational policies that are harmful

¹¹ See LDF Report: *Attack on our Power and Dignity: What Project 2025 Means for Black Communities*, Thurgood Marshall Institute (October 3, 2024), <https://tminstituteldf.org/project-2025-threats-to-education/>.

¹² Chris Megerian, What to know about Linda McMahon, Trump's pick for Education secretary, AP News (November 19, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/linda-mcmahon-trump-education-secretary-wwe-613016d0c164b89765af761404cbb123>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Zach Montague et al., *Trump Chooses Longtime Ally Linda McMahon to Run Education Dept.*, N.Y. TIMES (November 19, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/19/us/politics/linda-mcmahon-education-secretary-trump.html>.

¹⁵ Ken Bensinger et al., *The Group at the Center of Trump's Planning for a Second Term Is One You Haven't Heard of*, N.Y. TIMES (October 24, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/24/us/politics/donald-trump-campaign-america-first-policy-institute.html>.

toward Black students, other students of color, students who identify as LGBTQ, and students with disabilities. For example, the AFPI has called for the defunding of diversity, equity and inclusion policies and programs at universities. In an AFPI Research Report, it calls for the outright prohibition on the expenditure of university funds on diversity, equity and inclusion offices and personnel.¹⁶ The AFPI also has a strong commitment to supporting school choice programs.¹⁷ School choice programs siphon taxpayer dollars away from public school and into private schools which further exacerbates the decades low underinvestment in public schools and retrenches racial segregation in the public school system.¹⁸ As a result, low-income families suffer because resources are being stripped from public schools, denying students an equal opportunity to access a quality education.¹⁹

If the Senate confirms Ms. McMahon as Education Secretary, she will undoubtedly undermine federal funding in public school education and key civil rights protections for millions of students. Her record indicates that she lacks the necessary experience to lead a department that is charged with enforcing federal civil rights protections for Black students, other students of color, students who identify as LGBTQ, low-income students, and students with disabilities. Ms. McMahon should not be confirmed as the next Secretary of Education.

Sincerely,



Demetria L. McCain, Director of Policy
 NAACP Legal Defense Fund
 700 14th Street NW, Suite 600
 Washington, D.C. 20005

¹⁶ Jonathan Pidruzny, *Reversing the Woke Takeover of Higher Education: Strategies to Dismantle Campus DEI*, (August 2023), <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/research-report-reversing-the-woke-takeover-of-higher-education-strategies-to-dismantle-campus-dei>.

¹⁷ See AFPI News Release: *AFPI Champions President Trump's Executive Order Expanding School Choice*, (January 30, 2025), <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/afpi-champions-president-trumps-executive-order-expanding-school-choice>.

¹⁸ See LDF Repat: *Attack on our Power and Dignity: What Project 2025 Means for Black Communities*, Thurgood Marshall Institute (October 3, 2024), <https://tminstituteldf.org/project-2025-threats-to-education/>.

¹⁹ *Id.*



Protecting the Equal Rights
of Nonreligious Americans

February 12, 2025

1012 14th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
(www.secular.org)

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair
HELP Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
HELP Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cassidy and Sanders,

The Secular Coalition for America, on behalf of its twenty member organizations dedicated to the separation of church and state, freedom of religion or belief, and the rights of the nonreligious, is writing to urge you to oppose the nomination of Linda McMahon to be Secretary of Education. Minimally, any executive nominee should be committed to upholding the mission of the department they will oversee, whereas McMahon's support for school privatization measures indicates she has no intention of "ensuring equal access" or "fostering educational excellence."

McMahon's support for school vouchers, which decades of independent research have shown drain money from the public education system that teaches nearly 90 percent of America's students, is incompatible with the mission of the Department of Education. Vouchers divert billions of public dollars each year to private, mostly religious schools that serve just 10 percent of students nationally. We are strenuously opposed to any diversion of public tax dollars to subsidize religious schools and sectarian instruction.

The Constitution is a uniquely secular document that established a secular government. It separates church and state. School vouchers and other privatization schemes are a clear effort to integrate the two in violation of long-established legal precedent and in spite of their unpopularity with American voters, who have repeatedly and soundly rejected these measures.

American Atheists • American Ethical Union • American Humanist Association • Atheist Alliance of America • Black Nonbelievers, Inc. • Camp Quest • The Center for Inquiry and the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science • The Clergy Project • Cultural and Secular Jewish Organization • Eco-Muslims of North America • Foundation Beyond Belief • The Freethought Society • Freedom From Religion Foundation • Hispanic American Freethinkers • Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers • Recovering From Religion • Secular Student Alliance • Secular Women • Society for Humanistic Judaism • Unitarian Universalist Humanists
202-299-1091 • 1012 14th St. NW Suite 205, Washington, DC 20005 • www.secular.org



There are many other evidence-based reasons to oppose school voucher programs and, correspondingly, any Secretary of Education nominee who would disregard these facts and promote a harmful agenda:

- Vouchers do not improve the achievement of students who use them to attend private school. Rather, long-term studies are increasingly showing voucher recipients have experienced significant declines in academic performance.¹
- Vouchers do not save taxpayers money or force public schools to improve. Instead, they routinely compel jurisdictions to raise taxes to support two competing education systems. By diverting millions or billions of scarce public dollars to a parallel, private education system, we undermine fact-based efforts to improve public schools and apply additional fiscal pressure to an already chronically underfunded public system.
- Public schools have fixed costs which are not reduced when voucher recipients choose to leave a public classroom.
- Research shows that in state after state, most vouchers go to wealthy families whose students never attended a public school, thus subsidizing private school tuition for those who can already afford it rather than ensuring equal access for those who cannot.²
- Unlike public schools, private and religious schools can — and do — discriminate on the basis of religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, English language learner status, refugee status, behavioral history, prior academic achievement, standardized test scores, interviews with applicants and parents, income, and other characteristics. Public dollars should not be used to fund educational models that are not required to serve all children, and they certainly must not be used to subsidize discriminatory practices by private entities, including sectarian schools.

¹ Lubienski, C. & Canbolat, Y. (2022, March). *Evolving Evidence on School Voucher Effects*. Indiana University Bloomington School of Education.
<https://education.indiana.edu/research/centers/ceep/education-policy/policy-briefs/2022/evolving-evidence-on-school-voucher-effects.html>; Canbolat, Y. (2022, October). *Does Competition Help Schools*. Indiana University Bloomington School of Education.
<https://education.indiana.edu/research/centers/ceep/education-policy/policy-briefs/2022/does-competition-help-schools.html>;

Kisa, Z., Dyehouse, M., Benz, M., & Herrington, C. (2020, June). *Evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program: Participation, Compliance, and Test Scores in 2018-2019*. Florida State University Learning Systems Institute.
<https://www.lisoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/url1/FTC-Report1819.pdf>

² Davis, Carl. (2023, March). *Tax Avoidance Continues to Fuel School Privatization Efforts*. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
<https://sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/itep/ITEP-brief-2023-Tax-Avoidance-Continues-to-Fuel-School-Privatization-Efforts.pdf>



- The U.S. Government Accountability Office has determined there is little to no oversight of private schools that receive public dollars. In many states that have enacted voucher programs, a lack of public oversight, accountability, transparency, and reporting requirements has led to egregious cases of misuse, abuse, and fraud.

Despite these and other proven shortcomings of school privatization policies, Linda McMahon continues to promote these programs. As Chairman of the Board of the America First Policy Institute she is accountable for AFPI's many policy statements supporting school vouchers, such as "AFPI Champions President Trump's Executive Order Expanding School Choice."

The Secretary of Education ought to be a champion for *all* of America's students, an experienced leader who is responsive to the American people and an expert who respects decades of independent research – not a loyalist, ideologue, or extremist who will promote schemes to defund nonsectarian public schools and divert those resources to unaccountable, discriminatory religious entities. We respectfully urge you to oppose this nomination.

Sincerely,

Steven Emmert
Executive Director

- American Atheists
- American Ethical Union
- American Humanist Association
- Association of Secular Elected Officials
- Atheist Alliance of America
- Black Nonbelievers
- Center For Inquiry/Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science
- Camp Quest
- Ex-Muslims of North America
- Freedom From Religion Foundation Action Fund
- Freethought Society
- Hispanic American Freethinkers
- Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists. Americans.

Recovering From Religion

Secular Student Alliance

Secular Woman

Society for Humanistic Judaism

The Clergy Project

Unitarian Universalist Humanist Association



February 12, 2025

United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators,

We, the undersigned organizations fighting to protect and support children and families across the country, urge you to reject the nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as Secretary of Education and oppose the Trump Administration's deeply harmful agenda to undermine and dismantle the Department of Education (ED).

As a nominee, Linda McMahon has a deeply concerning lack of experience in education and has shown an alarming [disregard](#) for the safety and wellbeing of children. Linda McMahon has also outright lied about her resume, including claiming she has a degree in education—which she [does not](#).

Moreover, Linda McMahon is the [former leader](#) of the America First Policy Institute, a think tank which has supported and advanced a policy agenda that would devastate public education funding, undermine students' civil rights, and provide massive tax cuts to corporations and billionaires while forcing cuts to the services that communities across the country depend on—including child care.

Even more concerning is Linda McMahon's willingness to carry out President Trump's agenda to undermine the Department of Education and the public school system that serves [90%](#) of children in the United States—and [95%](#) of all students with disabilities. President Trump has already given McMahon marching orders to "[put yourself out of a job](#)" and [stated repeatedly](#) throughout his campaign that he would like to "abolish" the Department. In just the past weeks, the Trump Administration has already placed Department of Education workers on [leave without notice](#), allowed Elon Musk and his cronies access to students' [sensitive data](#), [decimated the research arm](#) of the Department, and hinted at a [looming executive order](#) to dismantle the Department.

This type of all-out attack on public education would cause deep and lasting harm to the children, families and educators in our communities and undoubtedly worsen the child care crisis as well. In order to thrive, families need access to both a functioning child care system and a quality, public education system and lawmakers must recognize how the two systems are deeply interconnected. Make no mistake, any Trump Administration attack on public education is fundamentally an attack on child care as well.

We urge you to stand against these attacks and reject Linda McMahon's nomination. Linda McMahon cannot be trusted to protect the children and families in our communities and is unfit to serve as Secretary of Education.

Sincerely,

National Women's Law Center
Alliance for a Quality Education
NJ Communities United
Black Californians United for Early Care and Education
Virginia Organizing
First Up
Louisiana Policy Institute for Children
Family Forward Oregon
The Children's Partnership
Maine People's Alliance
Parent Voice California
Citizen Action of New York

National Council of Jewish Women
2055 L St NW Suite 650
Washington, DC 20036



National Council of Jewish Women

February 10, 2025

United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the 225,000 advocates of National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), I am writing to share our strong opposition to the nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Education.

The Department of Education oversees and coordinates policy and funding for 50 million students across the United States, ensuring America's students succeed in school and in life. Its role includes protecting students' civil rights by enforcing antidiscrimination laws; providing funding for public schools through Pell Grants and managing student loan programs to undergraduate students; ensuring special education for the 95% of children with disabilities in America that attend public schools; and supporting low income students through Title I programs that fund teachers in rural, suburban, and urban communities; among other foundational supports.

Yet, Linda McMahon, nominated to lead a department critical to the nation's education system, has minimal experience in the field. As board chair of the America First Policy Institute — a right-wing think tank partnering with President Trump to implement Project 2025, a plan to weaken federal agencies and roll back essential rights — she is fully aligned with its agenda. A co-chair of President Trump's transition team, Ms. McMahon has made clear that, if confirmed, she would follow through on the president's plan to dismantle the Department of Education entirely. If prioritizing loyalty over expertise and disregarding the future of students is the standard for qualification, then Linda McMahon fits the bill.

Our students deserve better. Someone with so little experience, and who intends to dismantle this essential agency responsible for protecting students from discrimination and advancing educational equity, should be a nonstarter. NCJW urges you to reject the nomination of Linda McMahon for the role of Education Secretary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jody Rabhan".

Jody Rabhan
Chief Policy Officer
National Council of Jewish Women



1350 I STREET NW
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WASHINGTON, DC 20005
202-588-5180
NWLC.ORG

February 12, 2025

Senator Bill Cassidy
Chairman, Senate HELP Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

Senator Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Senate HELP Committee
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 2

Re: Oppose Confirmation of Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee:

The National Women's Law Center, which has advocated on behalf of women and girls for over fifty years, writes in strong opposition to the confirmation of Linda McMahon to lead the U.S. Department of Education. The Secretary of Education is responsible for ensuring that students across the country have access to equal educational opportunities in safe and inclusive school environments. However, Ms. McMahon's scant experience in public education and total disregard for the safety of students and children make it clear she is unqualified for this role. We urge you to oppose her confirmation.

The Secretary of Education is charged with leading and preserving the Department of Education, which was created based on a recognition that high quality public education, equally available to all, is foundational for our democracy and key to the success of individuals and families. Yet Ms. McMahon is one of the architects of Trump's plan to sabotage and dismantle the Department's core functions. The Department of Education's predecessor agency was first created more than 70 years ago and became the agency it is today in 1979 to strengthen federal protection and oversight of education as a civil right.¹ Confirming Ms. McMahon would be a betrayal of the promise of equal opportunity, as her primary goal as Secretary of Education will be to eviscerate

¹ U.S. Department of Education, *An Overview of the U.S. Department of Education-- Pg 1* (last updated Jan. 15, 2025), <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/an-overview-of-the-us-department-of-education--pg-1>.

the Department—wreaking untold chaos and destruction upon 70 million students and likely blatantly flouting longstanding legal protections in the process.²

In addition, the Education Secretary is entrusted with protecting and advancing the education of our nation’s 70 million students, including more than 60 million students at public institutions, but Ms. McMahon’s public education credentials are almost nonexistent. Except for a single college semester as a student teacher, she has no experience as an educator in either a K-12 school or university. She has no experience in public education administration, besides a brief one-year stint as a political appointee for a state board of education—from which she resigned after it came to light that she had falsely claimed to hold a bachelor’s degree in education.³ Ms. McMahon’s primary education credential is sitting on the board of trustees of a private religious university.⁴

Beyond the lack of experience in public education, reports that Ms. McMahon concealed more than a decade of child sexual abuse that she was obligated to prevent and address are alarming.⁵ In October 2024, Ms. McMahon was named as a defendant in a federal lawsuit brought by a group of men who named that they experienced repeated sexual abuse as children by a World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) employee, Mel Phillips, while Ms. McMahon was the CEO of WWE.⁶ The lawsuit⁷ alleges that:

- From the early 1980s to 1992, Ms. McMahon and the other defendants allowed Phillips to entice young boys—many as young as 12 and 13⁸—to work for WWE so he could

² Stephanie Saul *et al.*, *Her Wrestling Empire Was Said to Harm Children. Trump Chose Her for Education.*, New York Times (Nov. 28, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/28/us/linda-mcmahon-education-wrestling-wwe.html>.

³ Beth Reinhard, *Trump’s education pick once incorrectly claimed to have education degree*, Washington Post (Nov. 20, 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/11/20/mcmahon-trump-education-degree/>.

⁴ Sacred Heart University, *Linda E. McMahon Student Commons* (last viewed Jan. 30, 2025), <https://www.sacredheart.edu/sacred-heart-life/life-on-campus/linda-e-mcmahon-student-commons/>; Robby Brod, *Trump administration profile: Linda McMahon*, Open Secrets (Jan. 27, 2025), <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2025/01/trump-administration-profile-linda-mcmahon> (Ms. McMahon has donated at least \$12 million to Sacred Heart University).

⁵ Nadra Nittle, *McMahon would oversee student safety — but advocates worry about her own misconduct allegations*, The 19th (Nov. 25, 2024), <https://19thnews.org/2024/11/linda-mcmahon-education-leaders-concerned-misconduct-allegations>. These allegations surfaced as early as 2020. David Bixenspan, *WWE cofounder Linda McMahon, who runs Trump’s biggest super PAC, once hired a suspected child molester on the condition that he ‘stop chasing after kids.’ He didn’t.*, Business Insider (Oct. 29, 2020), <https://www.businessinsider.com/linda-mcmahon-once-employed-an-accused-child-molester-2020-10>.

⁶ The lawsuit also named Ms. McMahon’s husband, Vincent McMahon, and the WWE, as defendants.

⁷ Compl. & Demand for Jury Trial, *Does 1-5 v. World Wrestling Entertainment, LLC et al.*, No. C-03-CV-24-004019, 2024 WL 4574048 (Md. Cir. Ct. Oct. 23, 2024), <https://dicellevitt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Date-Stamped-Does-1-5-v.-WWE-et-al.-Complaint-10.23.2024.pdf> [hereinafter WWE Complaint].

⁸WWE Complaint, *supra* note 7, at 3.

sexually abuse them,⁹ including forcing them to engage in sex acts and share hotel beds with him naked,¹⁰ despite Phillips' misconduct being "common knowledge" amongst WWE employees.¹¹

- The widespread knowledge of this abuse by WWE—and Ms. McMahon specifically—was confirmed in 2020 to *Business Insider* by a former WWE executive, who said that "it was just generally known, by everybody, that it was going on," and that the McMahons "clearly knew what was going on, but really did nothing to stop it."¹²
- As more and more allegations of sexual abuse against Phillips came to light, the McMahons fired Phillips in 1988 while concealing the reason for his absence and termination, only to rehire him just six weeks later on the condition that he "steer clear from the kids."¹³
- Ms. McMahon's husband later admitted in a 1992 interview with a reporter that he and Ms. McMahon knew that Phillips had a "peculiar and unnatural interest" in young children for years before they fired and rehired Phillips in 1988.¹⁴

It is the role of the Secretary of Education to ensure that no student's educational opportunities are threatened by sex-based harassment or discrimination, including through rigorous enforcement of Title IX's protections against sexual harassment and assault. These serious allegations that Ms. McMahon failed to intervene and covered up repeated sexual abuse of minors make her wholly unfit to serve in this role.

In addition, Ms. McMahon's destructive attacks on students' rights while at the helm of America First Policy Institute (AFPI) cast serious doubt on her ability to robustly enforce federal civil rights laws and create safe educational environments for all students. Ms. McMahon serves as the chair of AFPI, a group formed after Trump's defeat in the 2020 election that has openly advocated for anti-LGBTQI+ policies, including the exclusion of transgender students from school spaces like sports¹⁵ and the forcible outing of LGBTQI+ youth to their parents.¹⁶ Ms.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 12, 14-15, 56-70.

¹¹ *Id.* at 5.

¹² David Bixenspan, *WWE cofounder Linda McMahon, who runs Trump's biggest super PAC, once hired a suspected child molester on the condition that he 'stop chasing after kids.' He didn't.*, *Business Insider* (Oct. 29, 2020), <https://www.businessinsider.com/linda-mcmahon-once-employed-an-accused-child-molester-2020-10>; see also *WWE Complaint*, *supra* note 7, at 6.

¹³ *Id.* at 7.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 16, 17.

¹⁵ America First Policy Institute, *Pillar III: Defend Female Athletes and Preserve Fairness in Women's Sports* (last viewed Jan. 30, 2025), <https://agenda.americafirstpolicy.com/freedom-and-self-governance/defend-female-athletes-and-preserve-fairness-in-womens-sports>.

¹⁶ America First Policy Institute, *Restoring Parental Rights in Schools* (Apr. 23, 2024), <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/restoring-parental-rights-in-schools> (model school board policy requiring "written authorization from a parent/guardian ... to change a child's name or pronouns").

McMahon also spearheaded AFPI's recent attacks on the 2024 Title IX regulations,¹⁷ which strengthened and clarified protections for student survivors of sexual harassment and assault, LGBTQI+ students, and pregnant and parenting students so they could continue their educations safely.

Furthermore, as AFPI chair, Ms. McMahon pushed for a litany of other education policies that harm students and teachers alike.¹⁸ This includes undermining equal educational opportunity by defunding public schools to promote private school voucher programs.¹⁹ Voucher programs drain resources from public schools and funnel taxpayer money to private schools that are unaccountable to the public, which includes private schools that were created for the purpose of serving white families fleeing integrated public schools.²⁰ AFPI's agenda aligns closely with Project 2025, which has recommended eliminating Title I funding—which would devastate school districts and schools serving low-income students in the most economically vulnerable areas of our country and result in nearly 6% of teachers nationwide losing their jobs.²¹ AFPI also seeks to undermine teachers' ability to come together in a union to seek workplace protections and advocate for their students.²² Ms. McMahon also seeks to micromanage public school curriculum and students' access to books, threatening to withhold funds from schools that teach anything she and the Trump administration disagree with politically.²³

¹⁷ America First Policy Institute, *The 9 on title IX What you need to know about the Biden administration's proposed Changes to Title IX* (Sept. 9, 2022),

<https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/202209090the-9-on-title-ix-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-biden-administrations-proposed-changes-to-title-ix> (urging the public to advocate against the 2024 Title IX rule with the Department of Education, school board members, federal lawmakers, and social media).

¹⁸ See America First Policy Institute, *America First Nomination: Linda McMahon* (Jan. 13, 2025),

<https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/america-first-nomination-linda-mcmahon>.

¹⁹ Joshua Cowen, *How School Voucher Programs Hurt Students*, Time (Apr. 19, 2023),

<https://time.com/6272666/school-voucher-programs-hurt-students>.

²⁰ Amanda Litvinov, *Top Three Reasons Linda McMahon Should Not Be Secretary of Education*, NEA Today (Nov. 20, 2024), <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/top-three-reasons-linda-mcmahon-should-not-be-secretary-education>.

²¹ Jessica Washington, *Linda McMahon Has No Education Experience Except Wanting to Defund Public Schools*, The Intercept (Dec. 30, 2024), <https://theintercept.com/2024/12/30/linda-mcmahon-trump-education-schools-wwe>.

²² Laurie Todd-Smith, *America First vs America Last: K-12 Education Reforms*, America First Policy Institute (Oct. 2, 2024), <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/america-first-vs-america-last-k-12-education-reforms>.

²³ For example, Ms. McMahon supports the belief that it is incorrect to teach that "America's foundation was built on racism." America First Policy Institute, *Pillar IV: Give Parents More Control Over the Education of Their Children*, 4 (last viewed Jan. 30, 2025),

https://agenda.americafirstpolicy.com/assets/uploads/Pillar_4_-_Give_Parents_More_Control_Over_Their_Children%E2%80%99s_Education.pdf.

Ms. McMahon also rejects "Critical Race Theory and radical gender ideology," framing any discussion of identity as "political indoctrination in classrooms." America First Policy Institute, *America First Nomination: Linda McMahon* (Jan. 13, 2025), <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/america-first-nomination-linda-mcmahon>.

Our nation's students deserve an Education Secretary who is experienced in education policy and committed to robustly enforcing federal civil rights laws, preserving public education, and strengthening, not gutting, the Department of Education's ability to support students—regardless of their gender, LGBTQI+ status, immigration status, family income, race, ethnicity, religion, or disability. Students deserve someone who will advocate for them, not someone trailed by shocking allegations of knowingly sacrificing numerous children to a serial sexual abuser for more than a decade. Given Ms. McMahon's record, we have no confidence that she can meet these standards. The National Women's Law Center strongly opposes the confirmation of Linda McMahon and urges the U.S. Senate HELP Committee to reject this nomination. If you have questions about the Law Center's opposition to Ms. McMahon's nomination, please contact me, or Shiwali Patel, Director of Safe and Inclusive Schools, at spatel@nwlc.org.

Sincerely,



Fatima Goss Graves
President and CEO

February 12, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C.

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our firm opposition to the advancement of Linda McMahon's nomination to be U.S. Secretary of Education. Her alignment with the Trump administration's Project 2025 agenda—a radical effort to dismantle public education, gut civil rights protections, and divert public resources away from students and working families—makes her unfit to serve in this critical role.

As the guarantor of civil rights, the federal government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure that all students — regardless of their race, income, disability, gender identity, or zip code — have access to a high-quality public education that prepares them for college, career, and life. This is not just a legal and moral imperative: it is essential to our nation's economic strength, democratic stability, and global competitiveness.

McMahon's nomination represents a direct and urgent threat to this mission. As Chair of the Board for the America First Policy Institute, she has supported policies that undermine public schools and strip students—especially those from underserved communities—of the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. If confirmed, McMahon would be positioned to execute President Trump's agenda of destruction, exclusion, and intolerance by:

- **Dismantling the U.S. Department of Education:** Eliminating the Department would remove the primary federal safeguard that protects students' civil rights and ensures that all students, regardless of income, race, disability, immigration status, and more, are provided access to a high-quality and inclusive public education. In addition, the Department provides \$79 billion in critical education investments ranging from funding for academic support for disadvantaged students to funding for special education to funding for career and technical education to the Pell grants and student loans that make college accessible to millions of Americans. Jeopardizing these funding streams for a radical agenda would greatly harm students and communities nationwide.
- **Privatizing Public School Dollars:** The irresponsible policies that the nominee has endorsed would prioritize private schools that pick and choose which students to serve—often discriminating against students with disabilities, English learners, and LGBTQ+ youth, and leaving out the vast majority of students across America—over the public schools that are the cornerstone of our communities, economy, and democracy. The Trump administration's push to privatize education through unregulated voucher

programs would funnel much-needed public dollars away from our public schools at a moment of educational crisis and need for recovery following the pandemic and into private schools that serve only about 10% of America's students.

- **Making College Less Affordable:** Proposals to privatize the student loan system and dismantle loan forgiveness programs would make it harder for millions of borrowers—especially Black, Latino, and low-income students—to not only access and complete higher education, but also to not be saddled with a lifetime of crushing debt. These proposals will ultimately widen the racial wealth gap and limit economic mobility.

Education is the gateway to opportunity, and the Trump administration's effort to shutter that gateway for millions of students is an attack on our nation's future. Weakening public education does not strengthen freedom—it restricts it, ensuring that only those with wealth and privilege can access the resources and knowledge needed to succeed. We must reject this agenda and instead reaffirm our commitment to a strong public education system that benefits all of us by preparing the next generation of leaders, workers, and engaged citizens.

For these reasons, we urge you to reject advancing Linda McMahon's nomination as U.S. Secretary of Education to the full Senate and instead support a leader who will uphold the Department's mission: to advance educational opportunity, protect civil rights, and invest in every student's success.

Sincerely,

All4Ed
Center for American Progress
Diverse Charter Schools Coalition
EdTrust
Education Leaders of Color (EdLoC)

Educators for Excellence
Healthy Schools Campaign
National Charter Collaborative
National Parents Union
The Pre-K-12 Education Team at
The Century Foundation



February 12, 2025

United States Senate
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 1.8 million AFT members—including pre-K through 12th-grade teachers, paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; and early childhood educators—I look forward to the upcoming confirmation hearing on the nomination of Linda McMahon for secretary of education and her answers on the education programs that children, students and families depend on.

We know that McMahon wanted to teach in her early life and that her work on the Connecticut State Board of Education led to her interest in literacy and building career pathways. These are two areas that are important to our members and public education. An education secretary should put the aspirations of our students, families and communities first. That means strengthening public education, not undermining it. Voters made it clear in November's down-ballot elections that that's what they wanted.

President Donald Trump said that McMahon's mission as education secretary is to "put herself out of a job." It is imperative that this committee asks McMahon about this. Dismantling the Department of Education sends a terrible, symbolic message, telling working families across the country that the federal government doesn't really care about their children's futures. This is not the solution families voted for.

Ending \$26 million of federal support for Title I schools would end the federal role in supporting low-income children in rural, suburban and urban areas with a high-quality education, including closing educational achievement gaps. Ending \$7.5 million of federal support for special education would end the federal role in helping kids with disabilities receive the services in schools that allow them to thrive. Ending support for the department would end the federal role in making career and technical education a real opportunity for high school students. It would also end the \$13 million in Pell Grants and other aid to help young adults become the first in their families to go to college. The Education Department

The AFT is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

AFT, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Nurses and Health
Professionals
AFT Retirees

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Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeLemus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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Francis J. Flynn
Jeffery M. Freitas
Ron Gross
Anthony M. Harmon
Karla Hernández-Mats
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David Koepnews, RN
Frederick E. Kowal
Terrence Martin, Sr.
Kara McCormick-Lyons
Daniel J. Montgomery
Michael Mulgrew
Cecily A. Myant-Cruz
Shari Obrenski
Melinda Person
Juan Ramirez
Andrew Spar
Denise Specht
Wayne Spence
Arthur G. Steinberg
Jessica J. Tang
Adam Urbanski
Debbie White, RN
Carl Williams
Lakia Wilson-Lumpkins
Sarah Wolford
Todd Wolfson



plays a crucial role in ensuring that the funding Congress appropriates for these critical programs reaches the students they are intended to support.

We have already seen this Trump administration make efforts designed to siphon federal money for public schools into unaccountable private hands and meddle in the local curriculums that schools and states have decided are best for their own students. Public schools are foundational to opportunity and dignity for everyone who steps inside our classrooms, whether white or Black, straight or gay, Native American or the Latino immigrant who just escaped tyranny; efforts to sow division and fear in classrooms are unacceptable. The education secretary must be someone who will promote and protect public education for all students, not someone who will focus their energy on dismantling it.

We agree with McMahon on the importance of focusing on improving literacy and finding more CTE opportunities. But we question the future of these popular ideas and more if the Trump administration follows through with plans to close the Education Department, leaving in doubt a federal funding lifeline that disproportionately goes to children in need, children with disabilities and young adults who go to college.

Our members proudly work with students and their families every day. They have always wanted local control of education, not state control, and they understand the importance of local schools. They want the latitude to teach, not test, to meet their students' needs. But without the federal programs and funding, many students will not receive the additional support they need to allow them to fully reach their potential.

It is imperative to ask McMahon:

- Without funding and protections for students with disabilities under the Education Department, who will ensure students with Individualized Education Programs and 504 plans are receiving the services needed to meet their goals to succeed?
- Without programs that focus on rural communities, what happens to kids who go to schools in rural areas like those in South Dakota, Montana and Alaska?
- Without an Education Department, how do we ensure there is funding to prepare students for career opportunities and for college?
- For more than 50 years, Pell Grants allowed over 80 million students to attend and graduate from college—usually the first in their families to do so. Currently, approximately 6 million students receive Pell Grant awards. Without an Education Department to issue these Pell Grants, will students with lower or moderate family incomes be forced to take out more student loans or drop out of college?

U.S. Senate/HELP Committee/Nomination of Linda McMahon/Page 3

- Without additional funding for reading specialists under Title I, how will school districts help teachers and paraprofessionals with literacy support?
- The purpose of K-12 education law was to provide all students with a high-quality education and level the playing field for specific student populations that need additional need-based resources to close educational achievement gaps. If Title I is turned into a block grant, the federal government will lose oversight of how the funding is used, and the funding will no longer be targeted to the students who need the most assistance. Without targeting, how will school districts and schools help students learn and succeed without the additional resources?
- Without an Office for Civil Rights, who will ensure that kids, students and families are protected so everyone in school and in college feels safe, welcome and ready to learn?
- If the answer is to move all education programs to different U.S. departments and agencies, then how can McMahon commit to families that:
 - The programs they rely on to protect their children's access to a free, high-quality public education will be safe;
 - Their children will have access to advance placement classes to prepare for college;
 - The programs to help close achievement gaps will be available and classrooms won't be overcrowded; and
 - Their neighborhood public school that they love will not suddenly find itself with a budget shortfall and additional staff shortages?
- Does McMahon plan to disregard existing law—both funding decisions and authorized uses of funding—to implement this administration's executive actions?
- The Education Department alone oversees the private information of 43 million student borrowers who hold \$1.6 trillion in student debt. The department is effectively one of America's biggest banks. We encourage students and families to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid yearly to gain access to student aid and loans to help with the cost of college. When Americans interact with the U.S. government, they often entrust federal agencies with sensitive personal information. With FAFSA, families are providing Social Security numbers and IRS data. That bond of trust has been broken by allowing Elon Musk to hack and mine private and personal data. Is McMahon willing to acknowledge this privacy breach and work to protect the information of students and families?

U.S. Senate/HELP Committee/Nomination of Linda McMahon/Page 4

We look forward to the answers to these questions. And while we expect we will disagree with Linda McMahon on many issues, our devotion to kids requires us to work together on policies that can improve the lives of students, their families, their educators and their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Randi Weingarten
President, AFT

RW : emc opeiu #2 afl-cio

February 12, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair
U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C.

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C.

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

Student Debt Crisis Center (SDCC) is writing to demonstrate our deep concern about Linda McMahon's nomination as U.S. Secretary of Education. SDCC is a nonprofit organization representing nearly 2 million Americans, many with student debt. SDCC engages in education, outreach, and advocacy in an effort to end the student debt crisis. Over the last six months, SDCC has met with more than 550 student loan borrowers and hosted virtual informational webinars with thousands in attendance. In just one week, SDCC supporters have sent **almost 75,000 letters** to members of Congress, with **more than 22,000** going to the HELP Committee alone, urging them to defend student loan borrowers and the Department of Education.

Linda McMahon's nomination would directly impact our work and the millions of individuals that we serve. The information we share with our supporters via email, social media, and in-person regarding updates and existing student loan programs comes directly from the Department of Education. Our ability to advocate for our supporters who receive incorrect information from their student loan servicer regarding their account or eligibility for existing programs is critical to our work and mission statement.

Linda McMahon's lack of [substantive education experience](#) and long history as a Trump loyalist are cause for major concern that she could be a "rubber stamp" Secretary of Education that would shepherd President Trump's most harmful Project 2025 policies [at the expense](#) of students and working families. Further, Linda McMahon's reported attempt to make up [claims](#) about having a degree in education should also raise questions about her judgment and trustworthiness in disclosing her plans to lead such a critical agency. American students, educators, and families deserve a Secretary of Education who is, at the very least, qualified for the job and will lead with honesty.

If confirmed, Linda McMahon could be tasked with leading the very agency that President Trump seeks to dismantle. As you most certainly are aware, President Trump's reported plans to continue implementing his Project 2025 agenda by taking executive action to dismantle the Department of Education (the Department) would wreak havoc on millions of students and families struggling to pay for college and managing their student debt. This agenda calls for dismantling the Department and privatizing the federal student loan system. It aims to force millions of borrowers to pay even more on their monthly student loan bills, push debt relief further out of reach and eliminate the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, and even roll back critical safeguards that protect students and families when they are cheated by

predatory schools. As Chair of the [America First Policy Institute](#), McMahon already has a track record of pushing policies in alignment with the right-wing Project 2025 [agenda](#) that would disproportionately harm working families with student [debt](#) and make the student loan debt crisis even worse.

Millions of Americans and working families across our nation are struggling to cover the rising cost of college and are financially crushed under the weight of the student loan debt crisis. Student debt, while often portrayed as a young person's issue, impacts individuals across multiple generations. Most of SDCC's supporters are actually middle-aged individuals, parents, and older Americans. Many individuals went back to school, took out parent plus loans, never finished their degree, or know someone who has been greatly impacted by student debt. These are individuals who cannot buy homes, retire, or invest in their futures because of their student loan debt. The decisions made by the incoming Education Secretary will directly impact these individuals. Linda McMahon must be asked whether she supports President Trump and Elon Musk's comments about dismantling the Department of Education and where she stands when it comes to putting students' and borrowers' interests first. Borrowers deserve an Education Secretary that is committed to protecting their rights and ensuring that student debt is not a life sentence. Borrowers deserve a Secretary of Education who puts education over profits.

We urge you to reject the nomination of Linda McMahon as U.S. Secretary of Education. She is a danger to working families and more than 40 million Americans with student debt.

Sincerely,
Student Debt Crisis Center

Here is the letter that 75,000 individuals have sent to their members of Congress:

I urge you to stop the administration's plans to dismantle the Department of Education. Student loan borrowers MUST be protected in these uncertain times.

Last year, multiple servicers were brought before Congress and held accountable, and thousands of borrowers complained about additional servicer misconduct. In our 2024 borrower survey, 75% of borrowers did not trust the information they received from their servicer, leaving them to rely on the information they directly received from the Department of Education.

Dismantling the Department of Education will directly harm millions of student loan borrowers nationwide, including those in your Congressional district. Borrowers will see their monthly expenses increase with the availability of Department-led programs such as Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plans, etc., unavailable should they no longer exist.

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The Department of Education is critical to ensuring that everyday Americans can afford their living expenses, and they rely on you to do so.

Thank you.



From the Pre-K-12 Education Team at The Century Foundation

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
455 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC,

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
332 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C.

In Opposition to Confirmation of Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Pre-K-12 Education Team at The Century Foundation, we write to express our serious concern with Linda McMahon's nomination as Secretary of Education. We urge you to oppose her confirmation.

By way of background, The Century Foundation (TCF) is an independent public policy think tank recognized for its expertise in education and other policy fields, including health care, and employment. TCF fellows have conducted extensive research on issues related to Pre-K-12 and higher education, disability justice, and workforce development, among other issues. We have testified before Congress and our work has been cited by government officials at the federal, state and local level.

Based on our research and expertise regarding the essential services and resources needed to ensure that every student in the United States can succeed, we are deeply concerned about McMahon's [views](#) regarding America's students and education, including her promotion of a voucher-based education system that has been [shown](#) to privilege more affluent students and disadvantage low-income students and students in areas with higher concentrations of poverty. We are also concerned that McMahon is likely to support the Trump Administration's stated intention to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (Department). It is imperative that any nominee to the Department enforce its mission of "promoting student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access for students of all ages."

McMahon lacks substantive education experience

McMahon lacks the substantive education experience to carry out the Department's mission. Aside from serving one year on the Connecticut Board of Education, she has not held any

From the Pre-K-12 Education Team at The Century Foundation
February 11, 2025

education leadership position. Furthermore, her vision for America's schools, as summarized by the [America First Policy Institute](#), is exceptionally narrow, centering primarily on siphoning taxpayer dollars from public schools into private systems through expanded voucher programs and reducing the important federal role in education.

McMahon's private education agenda benefits few and harms many students

Decades of research have shown that private school voucher programs [do not improve student achievement](#) and, instead, create [deep inequities](#). Families with fewer resources and who lack transportation options are at a disadvantage in a private school market where vouchers cover some but not all of their costs. Further challenges exist for families whose [children have disabilities or behavioral needs](#), as many private institutions can refuse to admit or appropriately serve those students. The loss of public school students to private schools through voucher programs threatens to create a [separate and unequal](#) education landscape of voucher-backed private schools and underfunded public schools. Expanding this policy risks returning communities across America to a place of deep educational inequity reminiscent of the days before the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Dismantling the Department of Education means less support and resources for our nation's most underserved students

Defunding our nation's public school system coupled with a disassembling of the Department of Education will compromise funding and eliminate essential safeguards that students and families across the country depend on for the opportunity to succeed in school and life. If Department-administered federal grants like [Title I](#) are materially changed to a "no-strings-attached" block grant, for example, that would likely result in less state support for public education as well as less accountability to ensure that the needs of some of our nation's most underserved students are met. So too, students with disabilities will find little recourse or accountability when their school districts fail to meet their needs without an overarching system that the Department has today to set standards and intervene on their behalf—eviscerating the intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

America's students and their families need and deserve an education leader who will leverage federal resources to ensure all students have access to a quality education by supporting local public schools and educators in every part of the United States. Regrettably, the plans articulated by the Trump Administration and Secretary-designate McMahon focus on the success of a select few students but completely disregards the needs of students and families who have been historically underserved and starved of critical educational resources.

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From the Pre-K-12 Education Team at The Century Foundation
February 11, 2025

We strongly urge you to vote no on Linda McMahon's confirmation and encourage you to recommend that the President instead nominate a leader who will be a champion for all students and advance the Department's mission and our nation's best interests.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

The Pre-K-12 Education Team at The Century Foundation

Cc: Members of the Senate HELP Committee



Chairman Bill Cassidy, M.D.
 Ranking Member Bernie Sanders
 Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20540

January 7, 2025

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders,

The past several years have been frustrating and enraging for millions of parents across the country. Shuttered schools left their children without adequate schooling – some for as long as two years. Parents were then villainized by the federal government and likened to “domestic terrorists” by the Department of Justice for simply speaking up on behalf of their families.¹ In addition to dealing with an education system that failed to carry out its basic responsibilities, they also had to stress about the divisive, and at times inappropriate, content that was being pushed on their kids in schools.

The Biden administration’s Department of Education has been the source for the outrage many families have felt. His education officials pushed an anti-female Title IX policy that compromised the safety and security of girls and women across federally funded academic institutions – a rule so dangerous that federal courts have blocked it in most of the country. See *Dep’t of Educ. v. Louisiana*, 603 U.S. 866 (2024) (unanimously upholding those injunctions). They gave the teachers unions unfettered access to shape policy decisions at the expense of the academic needs of children. They used their authority to push race and gender programming in schools. See *Proposed Priorities – Am. History and Civics Educ.*, 86 Fed. Reg. 20348 (Apr. 19, 2021); *Applications for New Awards – Am. History and Civics Educ. Nat’l Activities Program*, 86 Fed. Reg. 38055 (July 19, 2021). They neglected their responsibilities to examine egregious complaints submitted to their Office of Civil Rights. They botched the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) rollout, creating significant hurdles for students applying to college, especially low-income families.²

¹ U.S. House of Reps. Comm. on the Judiciary, *Joe Biden “Excited” About “Going After Parents” with “Domestic Terrorism” Letter* (June 14, 2022), perma.cc/8WTY-8BXT.

² Government Accountability Office, *Botched FAFSA Rollout Leaves Uncertainty for Students Seeking Financial Aid for College* (Sept. 24, 2024), perma.cc/QUW6-FJNH.

It should also be no surprise that American students' test scores continue to lag.³ International test results showed a steep drop in math scores for 4th and 8th graders in the U.S., and at least 12 other countries performed better than American students.

Parents have had enough and for millions of families, January 20th, 2025, cannot come soon enough. They are excited for a new era of education in America. They are looking forward to leadership, both in the White House and in Congress, that will finally get rid of disastrous DEI policies, return to a meritocracy, and increase school choice for families. At Parents Defending Education Action, we are particularly excited to see Linda McMahon, President Trump's nominee for Secretary of Education, take the helm to launch a resurgence of learning and efficiency into our schools.

Parents in America deserve an education system that will make their children's learning and parental involvement a cornerstone of its mission. That is exactly what they can expect from Ms. McMahon. She is a smart, innovative, and fearless business leader who knows what it takes to run a successful company. As one of the co-founders of WWE, she helped take what started out as a 13-person operation and grew it to a powerhouse that had hundreds of employees around the world. She also served as the 25th Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration where she worked to represent 30 million small businesses across the country.

On top of her impressive and impeccable business credentials, she also spent time serving on the Connecticut Board of Education and was a member of the Board of Trustees at Sacred Heart University. She also has more than 15 years working in and around politics, making her well suited to navigate her new role in the administration.

As an organization that advocates on behalf of parents' concerns and the quality of education, we urge you to expedite and prioritize Ms. McMahon's nomination. She has already gone through a confirmation process and received an impressive 81 votes in support of her nomination to the Small Business Administration just a few years ago. Even in a partisan process, there was overwhelming support for Ms. McMahon. There is no reason to delay – let's ensure there is a swift confirmation process, so we can have officials in place to start tackling the education crises the Biden administration left behind.

Sincerely,



Michele Exner
Director of Federal Affairs
Parents Defending Education Action

³ Erica Meltzer. "U.S. math scores drop on major international test". *Chalkbeat*, December 4, 2024, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2024/12/04/timss-international-test-result-us-math-scores-decline-post-pandemic/>



671 N. Glebe Rd | Suite 900 | Arlington, VA

| www.CloseUp.org

Close Up Foundation
671 N. Glebe Road, Suite 900
Arlington, VA

January 13, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Cassidy:

As leadership of the Close Up Foundation, we are writing on behalf of our former board member, Linda McMahon, on the occasion of her nomination to lead the U.S. Department of Education.

Founded in 1971, Close Up is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, civic education organization that informs, inspires, and empowers young people to become active citizens. For over 50 years, we have partnered with school districts nationwide to serve more than one million students and educators through experiential learning programs in our nation's capital and in local communities, professional development, and curriculum design. Our work connects what students learn in class to the real world around them and helps them articulate their own views, listen to those of others, and engage with people of different backgrounds with tolerance and understanding.

Linda served as a member of the Board of Directors from 2009 until her confirmation to lead the Small Business Administration in 2017. Our Board of Directors is composed of people representing a broad political spectrum who share a passion for ensuring that the next generation of young people understand their responsibilities as educated citizens. During her time as a board member, Linda actively supported Close Up's mission and shared our common commitment: to provide educational opportunities to students of all backgrounds and to the vital importance of civic education in building and maintaining trust in our government—and in each other.

We greatly benefited from Linda's leadership, guidance, and insight as we worked together to help young people from all corners of the United States learn to engage in meaningful dialogue, examine the most critical issues facing our democracy, and come to believe in themselves as effective citizens. Linda's enthusiasm for civic education brought focus to our cause and greatly contributed to the lasting experience of our students and teachers.

We are grateful for Linda's contributions to Close Up, for her genuine concern for the education of American students, and for her dedication to nurturing young citizens who are engaged in their communities for a lifetime.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Adydan".

Eric Adydan
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mia Charity".

Mia Charity
President



February 4, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chair
United States Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Cassidy and members of the full Committee:

We the undersigned organizations, on behalf of the millions of Americans we represent, write to express our strong endorsement of Linda McMahon for the position of Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. Our collective organizations believe the Department desperately needs a complete overhaul after years of incompetence, hyper-partisanship, and a purposeful anti-Christian agenda. We wholeheartedly endorse her nomination and hope you come to the same conclusion we have: that she is the best hope for reshaping America's education system.

First and foremost, Linda McMahon has a strong background and the necessary qualifications to lead and improve the Department of Education. She has education experience, having spent two years on Connecticut's state Board of Education and 16 years as a member of the Board of Trustees for Sacred Heart University. She also has government experience — successfully leading the Small Business Administration during Trump's previous term. And she has policy chops, serving as Chair of the Board at the America First Policy Institute and as Co-Chair of the Trump-Vance transition team.

All that experience will serve her well at the Department of Education, which has gone off the rails under the Democrats' rule. The Biden-Harris administration has used the Department of Education not to educate America's children — who are steadily falling behind — but instead to push their radical cultural agenda on America's kids and to punish anyone who dares stand in their way. Kids today are taught to hate their country, divide themselves by race, and embrace a pervasive gender ideology.

The Department's abuse in the higher education sector is just as rampant, where the Biden administration decided to wage war against Christian universities, career colleges, and trade schools. This crusade has a dual purpose: to protect the higher education cartel against competition, and to persecute any Christian institution that dares to stand for biblical teaching and against cultural marxism. This crusade has been led by the Office of Enforcement — an

obscure division of the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Office created with the tacit purpose of targeting schools and programs that the Department of Education disfavors.

In fact, a recent analysis from the American Principles Project calculates nearly 70 percent of the penalties imposed by the Office of Enforcement have been against Christian and career-oriented schools, even though these programs represent fewer than 10 percent of college students.

For years, the Office put faith-based institutions and the Christian students they serve in the crosshairs.

We cannot stress enough the importance of protecting these valuable institutions. Christian colleges serve not only as educational bodies but also as communities where biblical values are upheld and explored in depth. They also serve as a bulwark against increasing anti-American, anti-Christian, and anti-semitic sentiment within the culture — we're certainly not seeing Hamas terrorism apologists intimidating their fellow students at these schools! There's a reason why woke ideologues at USED have made Christian colleges a target. They understand that schools like Ashland University, Grand Canyon University, and Liberty University are critical to our defense of constitutional principles and the American way of life.

We are confident that once confirmed to the position, she will end the Department's weaponization towards certain colleges, promote education choice, and bring back common sense. Linda McMahon has never backed down from a challenge, and we know she will fight for all of America's students. We thank the Committee for considering our views and urge that she be confirmed in a timely fashion.

Sincerely,

Terry Schilling
President
American Principles Project

Jon Schweppe
Director of Policy
American Principles Project

Sandra Asuncion
Director of Government Affairs
American Principles Project

Kristen A. Ullman
President
Eagle Forum

Meg Kilgannon
Senior Fellow for Education Studies
Family Research Council

Charlie Misseijer
Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs
Moms for Liberty

Ryan P. Williams
President
Claremont Institute



January 16, 2025

Senator John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20540

Senator Bill Cassidy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20540

Dear Leader Thune and Chairman Cassidy:

On behalf of Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU) and our more than 800 member career colleges across the United States, I am writing to offer our wholehearted endorsement of Linda McMahon as the next Secretary of Education. As a successful entrepreneur, seasoned business leader, former federal agency head, and longtime advocate for career and workforce training, Secretary-designate McMahon offers a unique blend of business acumen, governmental experience, and passion for education reform that the U.S. Department of Education desperately needs.

Through her service as a member of the Connecticut State Board of Education and, most recently, as the administrator of the Small Business Administration, Secretary-designate McMahon understands how to navigate bureaucratic red tape and the political intricacies of large government agencies. As a successful business executive, she appreciates the role workforce training plays in the growth of our economy. She has the proven executive capabilities, political savvy, and policy pragmatism necessary to succeed in her new role. For America to remain competitive and expand its role as the world's leader in education, research and innovation, the Department of Education needs a secretary with experience in all aspects of educational achievement and workforce development. Linda McMahon is that person.

With the Trump administration beginning the task of developing education policy that will shape the lives of millions of Americans, the critical importance of career education has never been more apparent. Preparing America's students for the modern workforce requires leadership that recognizes the interdependent relationship between education and workforce preparedness. The career-based education offered by our institutions has served to bridge the skills gap employers increasingly face when hiring for millions of in-demand jobs. This skills gap has robbed many hardworking Americans of meaningful careers and the opportunity for economic growth and mobility. Equally important, it has prevented employers from growing their operations and maximizing their potential.

1530 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1050
Arlington, VA |

January 16, 2025

Secretary-designate McMahon brings a wealth of knowledge from both the public and private sectors. Her diverse background and skill set will serve as an asset in shaping policy that balances the educational needs and career goals of students with the expectations of employers seeking workers with the skills required to be competitive in today's global economy. Her nomination is a meaningful step forward in solving many of the problems plaguing higher education and workforce development. The Department of Education needs a Secretary who is forward-thinking and laser-focused on cultivating a system of higher education that prepares students for rewarding and impactful jobs, rather than promoting a backward-looking and self-defeating political agenda, as has been the case during the past few years of regulatory overreach at the agency.

Students at all levels deserve a choice in their educational setting, allowing them to choose the school and program that best suits their needs and life circumstances. We are confident that, under Linda McMahon's leadership, the Department will promote policies that spur innovation and growth, while alleviating the burdens of overregulation and bureaucracy. Higher education policy that only promotes traditional pathways and punishes innovation has hurt students and job creators for long enough. This moment in time warrants new leadership with a fresh perspective and creative solutions.

As the national association representing the nation's private, postsecondary career schools, CECU strongly supports the nomination of Linda McMahon. We are hopeful that the committee will move to confirm her nomination.

Sincerely,



Jason Altmire
President and Chief Executive Officer
Career Education Colleges and Universities

CONCERNED
WOMEN *for* AMERICA
LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

January 14, 2025

United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senators,

I write on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of members of Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee (CWALAC) to express our strong support of President Trump's nominee for Secretary of Education, Linda McMahon.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is in desperate need of an overhaul after the disastrous leadership of Miguel Cardona, who focused more on the woke agenda of the D.C. elites than on the fundamental purpose of working for excellence in education.

Linda McMahon is a breath of fresh air for students and families facing hostility from government actors. Parents and students should never be punished for demanding schools be places of learning, not hotbeds of protest. Parents and students expect that schools teach the essentials of reading, writing, mathematics, and science without polluting young minds with radical gender ideology.

McMahon is a strong advocate for school choice programs. In making his announcement of McMahon's nomination, President Trump said, "Linda will fight tirelessly to expand 'Choice' to every state in America and empower parents to make the best Education decisions for their families." The days of the education establishment supporting the establishment rather than parents and children are over.

Linda McMahon comes to this role having demonstrated her commitment to education and serving our country. She served on the Connecticut School Board and the board of Sacred Heart University for twenty years. Those who know her testify to her outspoken advocacy for excellent educational opportunities for students, regardless of zip code. She also served as the 25th Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) during President Trump's first term.

McMahon has proven herself capable of excelling as a savvy business leader who has led one of the most successful companies in America as Founder, President, and CEO of the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). She's ready for the fight.

McMahon's real-world, common-sense approach to the role of Secretary of Education is just what Americans want and what America needs. It is a major reason voters elected President Trump. Concerned Women for America's own exit polls showed that fully 70% of voters supported President Trump's opposition to policies promoting a transactivist agenda in our nation's schools and sports.¹ It is time for Title IX protections to be restored for female students and athletes, the rights of parents to be upheld, educational institutions to be held accountable, and the destructive agenda of the Biden Administration to be fully reversed.

CWALAC members, as most Americans, want the focus of education to be placed back on the fundamentals of education through state and local governance, and we are pleased to see Mrs. McMahon is committed to putting the students first in her role as Secretary of Education. We urge you to vote for her swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Nance". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Penny Nance,
CEO and President
Concerned Women for America LAC

¹ Importance of Transgender Issues to Vote Choice, Concerned Women for America, <https://concernedwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/CWA2024ExitPoll.pdf>.

knowledge alliance

January 17, 2025

Senator Bill Cassidy
Chair, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC

Senator Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC

Dear Chair Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders,

[Knowledge Alliance \(KA\)](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization composed of the leading education groups dedicated to empowering schools, districts and all 50 States with the tools and resources needed to improve learning and outcomes for every student. KA members partner with States and districts to strengthen their education goals and address their pressing academic issues like improving literacy and math performance and overall school improvement. Over its 50-plus year history, KA's members serve as trusted, objective partners for State, local and Federal policymakers in efforts to build, implement and sustain improvements in student outcomes.

The Secretary of Education plays a pivotal role in ensuring that Federal education policy supports evidence-based decision-making and drives meaningful outcomes for students. Ms. McMahon can lead an effort to significantly enhance student achievement and prepare students for well-paying jobs, strengthening the U.S.'s position as a global economic leader. As Secretary, she will have the ability to support programs and policies that empower parents, educators and other decision-makers to use evidence-based strategies to meet students' needs and deliver world-class education.

At Knowledge Alliance, we know that a robust research, development and dissemination (RD&D) system is not just about producing evidence—it is about delivering it, scaling it and sustaining it. As Secretary, Ms. McMahon has the opportunity to support and strengthen programs like the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), Comprehensive Centers (CCs), Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grants and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) research grants that can enable the Federal investment in RD&D to have a transformative impact on schools and students. By empowering States and districts to adopt research backed strategies, these programs directly contribute to advancing student achievement and success.

We appreciate Ms. McMahon's leadership experience and her commitment to stakeholder engagement, and we look forward to working with her to strengthen the RD&D system to ensure that Federal investments in education achieve maximum impact for students and educators.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this nomination and for your commitment to strong leadership at the Department of Education. With Ms. McMahon's background, we know she values strong evidence to help make informed decisions and look forward to working with you and her to support student success. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can serve as a resource during this process.

Sincerely,



Rachel Dinkes
President & CEO
Knowledge Alliance

January 14, 2025



The Honorable Bill Cassidy
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE, Suite 828
828 Washington, DC

Dear Senator Cassidy:

We represent a national network of over 200 award winning education leaders, entrepreneurs, technology, policy and advocacy pioneers and are pleased to add our name to the list of supporters of Mrs. Linda McMahon, Secretary of Education Designate.

Together, the schools, programs and services our partners and affiliates represent serve more than 14 million students nationwide and are diverse in sector, approach, demographics and focus.

We are grateful for your commitment to restoring critical education decision making to states and specifically to parents, to ensure every child receives a world-class education no matter their zip code, without undue and inequitable interference from the federal government.

We are excited to work with Mrs. McMahon to achieve precisely that goal. She brings seasoned experience to the table and a commitment to ensuring that federal education policy significantly changes to align our country's education and workforce systems to ensure a 21st century workforce ready to face the challenges of our world. This issue is nothing short of a national security threat as our country faces new tests around the world.

Her priorities will also include needed changes in higher education to ensure that we are advancing programs that result in productive outcomes for students.

We believe that Linda McMahon is the right choice at the right time to serve as this nation's thirteenth Secretary of Education. We ask that you support her confirmation without any reservations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Allen
Founder & CEO of the Center for Education Reform



January 7, 2025

Senator John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

Senator Bill Cassidy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Leader Thune and Chairman Cassidy:

President Trump's historic election victory made it clear: there is a conservative revolution going on in America. That revolution was evident in all aspects, including education.

During COVID-19, millions of American students were stuck at home, and millions of American parents peered over their kids' shoulders and saw the exact same thing on their laptop screens. These parents realized that many school systems were failing to teach our kids reading, writing, and arithmetic, instead indoctrinating them with nonessential material. They didn't sit idly by; they showed up at school board meetings, ran for local office, elected governors who agreed with them, changed state education policies, and this past November, put Donald J. Trump back in the White House.

Now these parents are counting on President Trump to deliver on his education policies, and to do that, they need Linda McMahon confirmed as Secretary of Education.

McMahon is a rare find: a businesswoman who can also speak the language of government from her time leading the Small Business Administration. She worked on education policy in her home

January 7, 2025

state of Connecticut and is a mother and grandmother. She believes in a smaller federal government that prioritizes local voices and needs.

Unlike the Biden Administration, McMahon will not try to dictate singular, nationwide education policies from on-high in Washington. She will reverse burdensome mandates and target inefficiencies in the Department of Education. She will champion state leaders to continue the proven, conservative education reforms sweeping the nation; retaining and recruiting highly qualified teachers, a greater focus on literacy and civic education, expanded investments in workforce training, and parental empowerment.

The American people endorsed President Trump and his policies, including his plans to reduce the federal role in education. The President deserves to have the team he needs to turn those ideas into reality. That is why we fully support his nominee for Secretary of Education, Linda McMahon, and why we look forward to her speedy confirmation by the U.S. Senate once President Trump takes office again.

Sincerely,

Governor Mike Dunleavy
State of Alaska

Governor Sarah Sanders
State of Arkansas

Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida

Governor Brian Kemp
State of Georgia

Governor Brad Little
State of Idaho

Governor Eric Holcomb
State of Indiana

Governor Kim Reynolds
State of Iowa

Governor Jeff Landry
State of Louisiana

Governor Tate Reeves
State of Mississippi

Governor Mike Parson
State of Missouri

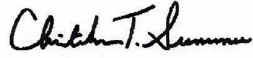
Governor Greg Gianforte
State of Montana

Governor Jim Pillen
State of Nebraska

January 7, 2025



Governor Joe Lombardo
State of Nevada



Governor Chris Sununu
State of New Hampshire



Governor Kelly Armstrong
State of North Dakota



Governor Kevin Stitt
State of Oklahoma



Governor Henry Dargan McMaster
State of South Carolina



Governor Kristi Noem
State of South Dakota



Governor Bill Lee
State of Tennessee



Governor Greg Abbott
State of Texas



Governor Spencer Cox
State of Utah



Governor Glenn Youngkin
Commonwealth of Virginia



Governor Jim Justice
State of West Virginia



Governor Mark Gordon
State of Wyoming



1440 State Hwy 248, Ste Q304 Branson, MO 64604
MomsForAmerica.us

Senator Bill Cassidy
828 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate

Dear Senator Cassidy,

I'm writing to ask you to support Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education. We desperately need a person like her in this very important position...the future of our children hangs in the balance.

Based on her qualifications: She spearheaded the expansion of universal school choice from 0 to 12 states; she fought for curriculum transparency and civics studies; and she protected women and girls while pushing back against harmful ideologies...I know that she's the ideal candidate to bring our education decisions back to the states where they belong. She's ready to tackle all the issues while keeping parental rights in the forefront. Please make the right decision for our children's well being!

Sincerely,
Katy Sutter
Winnetka, Illinois



January 9, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator
Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE, Suite 828
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Cassidy:

On behalf of the families of more than 40,000 students (and growing by the day) participating in North Carolina's private school choice programs, I write to urge your support to confirm President Trump's nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education.

I have been in education for 40+ years, in roles ranging from middle school teacher, to creating curriculum used across the nation, leading a private Christian school, and now as the President of North Carolina's leading parental school choice advocacy organization.

Given that experience, I can tell you that Linda McMahon is a distinguished advocate for the interests of all K-12 students and parents. As the chair of America First Policy Institute, Ms. McMahon has waged effective fights for universal school choice in states across the country. She is strongly committed to continuing this work from the federal level and to returning education back to the states, so that families – not federal bureaucrats – will decide what's best for their children.

Ms. McMahon is also strongly committed to advancing President Trump's education agenda, including further expansion of educational choice through passage of a federal tax credit scholarship, empowering parents and safeguarding parental rights, pushing for curriculum transparency, restoring patriotic education and civics studies, and protecting women and girls. These are values and priorities that reach across the political aisle.

North Carolina families that are currently benefiting from our state's highly successful and growing educational choice programs – as well as those families still seeking a broader array of educational options – need the leadership of Linda McMahon as President Trump's Secretary of Education. Linda's unique combination of private sector experience and leadership in K-12 and higher education will make a powerful impact in expanding opportunity for families in North Carolina and across America.

Parents for Educational Freedom North Carolina strongly endorses the nomination of Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education. We hope you will support her confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Long", written in a cursive style.

Mike Long
President, Parents for Educational Freedom North Carolina

Cc: The Honorable Thom Tillis
The Honorable Ted Budd



January 15, 2025

Senator Bill Cassidy
Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE, Suite 828
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Cassidy:

I am writing on behalf of Commonwealth Foundation to express our support for Secretary of Education Nominee Linda McMahon.

Secretary-Designee McMahon values that teachers are the experts in their classrooms, and local education authorities and state lawmakers know their communities best. She understands that the federal department of education should play a supportive role in this dynamic. According to the department's own definition, 'education is primarily a state and local responsibility.' In most states, federal dollars make up the smallest portion of total education funding compared to state and local shares. This is certainly the case in Pennsylvania, where only 12.4 percent of education funding comes from federal sources, while 35.5 percent and 52.1 percent come from state and local sources, respectively. Statewide student assessment existed in PA before it became a federal mandate in 2001. Scores have steadily declined since those federal mandates. All to say, state and local decision-making cannot be overstated when it comes to education.

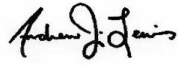
Secretary-Designee McMahon demonstrates an essential willingness to support states in serving the needs of each student and family—no matter their zip code, income, or level of access. While public schools are many families' first choice, there are serious shortcomings. Here in Pennsylvania, nearly 75% of 8th graders are not proficient in Math and 47% of 8th graders are not proficient in English Language Arts (ELA). Despite having the 11th highest total per-pupil spending amount, Pennsylvania does not rank in the top ten on our Nation's Report Card for 8th grade reading or math. There are 230,000 students in the bottom 15 percent of Pennsylvania's public schools, where only 11 percent of students are proficient in Math and only 31 percent are proficient in ELA. Achievement gaps persist for Hispanic and African American students, economically disadvantaged students, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities.

While families with resources can move to a different district or pay out-of-pocket for private school tuition, homeschooling, special education support or other supplemental learning services to fill in the gaps, what about those families who cannot? Secretary-Designee McMahon remembers these families and will prioritize the need for programs that support all parents in being able to make a choice about the best learning environment for their child.

Her experience on the Connecticut state board of education and supporting schools in her community is essential to understanding the danger of continuing to deny families a quality education due to their income or state of residence. 11 states now have universal or near universal school choice, and 27 more have had school choice-related bills introduced in their legislature by March of 2024. Pennsylvania is one of the 39 being left behind. There are thousands of students in Pennsylvania on waiting lists for a better school who would qualify for scholarships if the state did not impose arbitrary caps. There are 135,000 students attending tuition-free charter schools across the state, but there are tens of thousands more on waitlists, especially in high-need areas like Philadelphia. With Secretary-Designee McMahon's leadership in Washington, there will be a voice for the students and families in Pennsylvania who cannot afford to wait any longer.

The Commonwealth Foundation ardently supports the nomination of Linda McMahon as the Secretary of Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew J. Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew J. Lewis
CEO
Commonwealth Foundation



January 27, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator
Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE, Suite 828
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Cassidy:

The Justice Foundation has been an advocate for true educational reform through parental empowerment combined with school choice. We support President Donald Trump's nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education.

As a designated Hero For Children by the Texas State Board of Education for my public efforts on behalf of public education reform, I endorse Linda McMahon.

As an official SBOE Evaluator of the Texas Open Enrollment Charter School program when it was first enacted, I can tell you educational choice works.

On behalf of millions of parents and hurting school children, I endorse Linda McMahon and Education Choice.

Advancing Life, Liberty and Justice in Him,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allan E. Parker".

Allan E. Parker
President
The Justice Foundation

CC: Majority Leader Thune
Majority Whip Barrasso



February 11, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate,

On behalf of the members of the Guilford County, NC, Chapter of Moms for Liberty, we are honored to express our support for Linda McMahon's nomination as Secretary of Education. We believe that Linda's appointment will be instrumental in ending:

- Ideological indoctrination in classrooms, ensuring education remains focused on critical thinking and educational achievements.
- The overreach of teachers' unions that prioritize political agendas over student success and parental involvement.
- Federal overregulation that strips local communities of control over their children's education.

This endorsement reflects our unwavering commitment to advocating for parental rights, government transparency, and a high-quality education system that serves the best interests of every child in America.

Moms for Liberty is a grassroots organization dedicated to empowering parents to take an active role in their children's education and ensuring that our schools reflect the values of accountability, excellence, and local control. We believe that families must be central to educational decision-making and that a strong partnership between parents and schools is essential for student success.

Linda McMahon's record of leadership, innovation, and dedication to fostering opportunities for families and communities speaks for itself. This is not a new area of focus for McMahon: At the height of her business success, she made it her priority to develop the Get R.E.A.L. program literacy initiative. Now, at a time when our education system faces critical challenges, including record-low literacy rates, McMahon is ready to step up with unwavering dedication to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive, and that education remains a fundamental pillar of our nation's strength and future.

We are confident she will draw from her success as a business leader and former role as the head of the Small Business Administration, as she faces these complex challenges. We expect she will implement solutions that will streamline the Department of Education and keep the government bureaucracy laser-focused on its core mission while returning control to local communities.

We urge you to support Linda McMahon's nomination as Secretary of Education. Thank you for considering our endorsement. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you require further information or support.

Sincerely,

Maria Adams

Chair, Moms for Liberty Guilford County, NC

Dear Ms. Armstrong and Ms. DeCesaro,

I am writing to support **Linda McMahon's** confirmation as Secretary of Education. Our country needs education reform for our children, and parents need a strong voice in the discussions. Ms. McMahon will be the parents' rights advocate our schoolchildren need and deserve.

Sincerely,

Mark E. Leighton, CIC

West Central Companies
CFO



January 31, 2025

Senator Bill Cassidy
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

Senator Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, I am writing to express our support for the approval of Linda McMahon to serve as the United States Secretary of Education.

We lead a diverse coalition of organizations, schools, teachers, and families in advocating at the federal and state levels for policies that treat public charter schools, their teachers and staff, and families fairly and protect the right of families to choose the public schools that best meet their children's needs. Mrs. McMahon shares these priorities and has supported the public charter school community for decades. We are confident that under her leadership, the Department of Education will focus on improving outcomes for schoolchildren and increasing public school options for families across America.

As the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Mrs. McMahon championed bipartisan priorities including revitalizing rural communities, leading effective disaster relief, and raising awareness of SBA services and capital available to small business owners. Given Mrs. McMahon's track record working across the aisle, we believe that she will serve as an effective advocate for all students, no matter their background, race, or zip code.

Over the last 20 years, public charter school enrollment has grown by millions to 3.8 million students today. Those students attend 8,150 charter schools and campuses in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico.



Mrs. McMahon has said "The nation's greatest asset is the American worker." American schools are responsible for educating the children who are tomorrow's workers. Strengthening American education will have a positive impact on our economy. Data increasingly demonstrates that when charter schools open, students in traditional school districts also thrive.

Two 2024 research studies, one from the Fordham Institute and one from the Progressive Policy Institute, showed that students in both charter and traditional public schools do better in both rural and urban communities where charter schools exist. Stanford's Center for Research on Education has shown that public charter school students gain an average of 16 additional days of learning in reading and six extra days of learning in math each school year compared to their school district peers.

We are confident that Mrs. McMahon will foster an environment at the Department that encourages states to find creative solutions to our nation's most pressing educational issues, including by empowering parents to choose the public school that best meets their children's needs.

We look forward to working with Mrs. McMahon to strengthen public education and we encourage the Committee to support her confirmation.

Sincerely,

Starlee Coleman
President and CEO



AMERICAN FEDERATION *for* CHILDREN

January 23, 2025
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator
Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE, Suite 828
Washington, DC 20540

Dear Senator Cassidy:

On behalf of the millions of American families who urgently need new or expanded education options for their children, I write to urge your support to confirm President Trump's nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education.

President Trump's campaign was crystal clear: School choice is a top priority for his administration. His nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education drives this commitment home. For the countless families our team members across America work with every day, this progress cannot come quickly enough.

Following a successful career exemplifying the power of innovation, accountability, and relentless focus on results, Ms. McMahon has been a stalwart supporter of bringing those qualities to America's education system. As chair of the America First Policy Institute, she partnered with our team at the American Federation for Children to advance school choice in dozens of states across the country. As Secretary of Education, she will bring that same vision to the national stage. Ms. McMahon ran a revolutionary company, and our K-12 system desperately needs a revolution.

The centerpiece of Trump and McMahon's agenda is the Educational Choice for Children Act, on which we applaud your steadfast leadership. As you know, this plan will enable parents in every state to access the freedom to choose where, when, and how their children are educated. Advancing nationwide education freedom will mean millions of families will finally break free from systems that have failed them for generations. It's a sorely needed movement that's taken many states by storm already. Linda McMahon will help take it nationwide.

The American Federation for Children, the nation's largest school choice advocacy organization, strongly endorses the nomination of Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education. We hope you will support her confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tommy Schultz', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Tommy Schultz
CEO, American Federation for Children

CC: Majority Leader Thune
Majority Whip Barrasso



February 10, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
 Chair, Senate HELP Committee
 455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC

Dear Senator Cassidy and Members of the HELP Committee,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing a coalition of taxpayer, limited government, education, and free market advocates, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Linda McMahon to lead the Department of Education.

After four years of incompetent and highly partisan stewardship, the DoEd is in absolute disarray on all levels. Linda McMahon has a distinguished track record as a proven executive within the public and private sectors, and her thoughtful, principled leadership is exactly what is needed to right the Department's ship. We strongly support her vision and urge you to support her nomination.

The DoEd needs a fundamental course correction to best serve America's students and taxpayers given its four failed years under the previous administration. American taxpayers and students experienced an unprecedented level of incompetence, partisanship, and arrogance coming directly from the Secretary's office. From fumbling the FAFSA rollout and ignoring the rebuke from the Supreme Court on illegal student loan bailout scheme, to misguided rulemakings and weaponization against certain types of schools, the Department has been mired in deep controversy.

Linda McMahon is ideally qualified to fix the Department's core problems. At the Department, Mrs. McMahon will draw on her extensive experience as a business executive, entrepreneur, and former Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration. An education leader, she served on the Connecticut Board of Education and as a longtime trustee of Sacred Heart University, a private Catholic school.

Combining her experiences in the private and public sectors, Linda McMahon will be the Department's urgently needed agent of change. Not only has she been an outspoken critic of the Department's many missteps but achieved public notoriety as a forceful advocate for reining in its bureaucracy. We are confident she will end the unconstitutional student loan bailout scheme, retool misguided regulations, promote choice in higher education, and strengthen the Pell grant system to ensure every American has access to high-quality education.

We look forward to Mrs. McMahon promoting competition in the higher education sector and bringing an end to the previous administration's relentless and egregious attacks on career-oriented colleges. Career colleges serve a critical role in our society – providing affordable and flexible learning opportunities for working families, minorities, and veterans. These schools teach a skills-

based curriculum and provide hands-on experience in key fields such as public safety, nursing, cosmetology, senior-care, cyber security, and more.

We are also hopeful that Mrs. McMahon will review some particularly burdensome regulations that harm students who attend such colleges. We would urge her to look closely at regulations finalized in the last administration pertaining to 90/10 and Gainful Employment – two regulations that many of our organizations have highlighted as ripe for reversing.

We have full confidence in Mrs. McMahon to be an independent and thoughtful leader on education issues in President Trump's historic second term. She will have a long agenda ahead of her to restore accountability, end the bailouts, promote competition, and end the Department's far-left activism. With no time to waste, we urge you to swiftly confirm Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education.

Sincerely,

Gerard Scimeca
Chairman
Consumer Action for a Strong Economy

David Williams
President
Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Jim Martin
Founder & Chairman
60 Plus Association

Saulius "Saul" Anuzis
President
American Association of Senior Citizens

Carrie Lukas
President
Independent Women's Forum

Jeff Mazzella
President
Center for Individual Freedom

Bob Carey
Director
National Defense Committee

Jenna Robinson
President
The James G. Martin Center
for Academic Renewal

Seton Motley
President
Less Government

George Landrith
President
Frontiers of Freedom

Charles Moran
President
Log Cabin Republicans

Stephanie Smith
President & CEO
Alabama Policy Institute

Paul Gessing
President
Rio Grande Foundation

Derrick Max
President & CEO
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy

Heather R. Higgins
CEO
Independent Women's Voice

Peter W. Wood
President
National Association of Scholars
The James Madison Center



1440 State Hwy 248, Ste Q304 Branson, MO 64604
MomsForAmerica.us

Senator Bill Cassidy
828 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate

Dear Senator Cassidy,

Why we need Linda McMahon... please! Our country needs a REAL advocate for our children in the education system. Linda has spearheaded the expansion of universal school choice from 0 to 12 states.

She fought for curriculum transparency, patriotic education, and civics studies.

She protected women and girls while pushing back against harmful ideologies in schools. These are just a few VERY IMPORTANT reasons why our children need her at the helm versus weird ideologies that are harmful to a child's innocence.

Sincerely,
Susie Pospichal
Melissa, Texas



JULIE PICKREN



TEXAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 7

Texas State Board of Education

District 7

12/26/2024

Senator Bill Cassidy
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Cassidy and Members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee,

It is my honor to represent over two million Americans and serve almost six million children in Texas public education. I am writing to offer my strong endorsement for Linda McMahon as the next U.S. Secretary of Education. I have had the privilege of observing her exemplary leadership and dedication throughout her career, and I firmly believe that her vision, accomplishments, and commitment to improving education will make her an outstanding choice for this critical role.

Linda McMahon's leadership experience is both extensive and diverse, spanning across the business, nonprofit, and public sectors. As co-founder and former CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), she transformed the company into a global entertainment empire, creating thousands of jobs and expanding its reach worldwide. Her strategic thinking, business acumen, and capacity to innovate would be invaluable in the education sector, where bold leadership is necessary to address the challenges of a rapidly evolving world.

Her success as Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) further highlights her exceptional leadership skills and her ability to navigate complex challenges. Under Linda's direction, the SBA made significant strides in promoting small business growth and expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs across the country. She focused on increasing access to capital for small businesses, especially those owned by minorities and women, and worked to



District Address
3422 Business Center Drive
Suite 1067
Pearland, TX



JULIE PICKREN



TEXAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 7

streamline government processes to foster a more efficient and supportive environment for business development. This experience in fostering growth and accessibility, combined with her deep understanding of workforce development, provides a solid foundation for her to drive meaningful change in education policy.

Beyond her success in business and public service, Linda has consistently demonstrated her commitment to public service and educational advancement. Her philanthropic efforts, through various charitable organizations, have supported initiatives that encourage academic excellence, skill-building, and community engagement. Her work has directly impacted students, educators, and communities across the nation.

Linda McMahon has demonstrated time and again that she is a leader who values collaboration, innovation, and results. Her vision for education is one that prioritizes access, quality, and opportunity for all students, while also preparing them for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st-century economy. Her exceptional leadership skills, strategic thinking, and unwavering commitment to excellence make her the ideal candidate to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education. I am confident that Linda McMahon will bring a fresh perspective and a dedicated approach to improving our nation's education system. I strongly recommend her for this position and urge you to support her nomination.

Sincerely,
Honorable Julie Pickren
Texas State Board of Education
District 7



District Address
3422 Business Center Drive
Suite 105.7
Peachland, TX

(HELP Committee)

From: [Redacted]
Sent: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: [Redacted]

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for appointing Linda McMahon for the Secretary of Education under President Trump's leadership. It is so very important that American parents have a parental rights advocate like Linda leading the charge for educating our children.

I am a wife and mother who is very invested in my child's upbringing and education. The morals and values that my husband and I live and teach our son is central to our family ties and relationships. We are graduates of college, and my husband of graduate school and we prioritize the importance of education in our son's life as we guide and shape him to be successful in his life.

For the last 4 years, we've witnessed bureaucracy advocacy in lock step with ideological teacher's union priorities. Education has been hijacked and weaponized against our children, leaving them discriminated against, failing and unsupported. The last administration fought to put extreme political correctness over the support and success of our children and it shows. School districts inundated with a full frontal DEI and Critical Race Theory assault. Threatening to withhold federal funding for non-compliance with politically charged and inappropriate gender ideology worshipping during class time has also greatly eroded the integrity of our children's education and the trust of American parents everywhere.

I am appealing to you, members of the U.S. Senate, to fully vet Linda McMahon with the non-political questioning to support her with confidence as the next Secretary of Education. Recent Senate hearings have been a waste of time with Senators playing games with questions, rather than asking the tough and insightful questions that the American people would like to learn about a nominee.

As a parent, full time employee and someone who's hired and managed people in the past, there are a few things I encourage you to consider when vetting the nominees. Knowing their role will be to put the President's policies and agenda into actions, ask yourself, can she do the job? Does she have that potential? Will she do the job? Is it something that she will take on with passion, dedication, intention and focus? and is she a good fit for what is needed at the moment and what your constituents have expressed? (cultural fit).

Based on my review of Linda McMahon's background, I support appointing her 100%. America needs more ideas and creativity, not bureaucrats who go through the same motions just to collect a paycheck every 2 weeks. Linda has experience understanding and managing a government agency so there is no learning curve there. We need outsiders with fresh eyes and a can do attitude, the kind that has defined Americans since its founding. The vast business experience and presidential transition team experience and success Linda holds is invaluable. We need someone who is a parent and understands how the "stakeholder" thinks and feels, and who is open to hearing their input and putting their interests first. That Linda is 100% aligned with and supportive of President Trump's views on education will satisfy the resounding vote from American parents to "Make Education Great Again". Finally, Linda's advocacy for expanding school choice options for students at the America First Policy Institute is extensive in policy work and has prepared her for this new role.

No more games. No more politics. We're talking about our children, our future, and we don't have time to waste nor to make them repeat their k-12 education because we keep getting caught up in peripheral social causes which have nothing to do with education.

American PARENTS have made their voices heard on Election Day and again, right now. Confirm Linda McMahon and give American children the opportunity to excel in new ways and to give parents their voice back.

Respectfully,
 Alyson Warner Nazareth, PA

(HELP Committee)

From: [Redacted]
Sent: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: [Redacted]

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this email to voice my support for the confirmation of Mrs. McMahon. As chairman of the Rockland County NY branch of the Moms for Liberty, education is very important to parents like me.

It is of my belief that Mrs McMahon will return to a policy of promoting a solid education, focusing on the importance of core course rigor, and moving away from the current emphasis on Diversity, Equity and inclusion. We, as a nation, must return to academic excellence, and move away from the woke agenda.

Please, consider confirming Mrs McMahon as Secretary of Education.

With gratitude,

Rory Bradley
Rockland county NY Moms of Liberty

(HELP Committee)

From: [Redacted]
Sent: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: [Redacted]

Dear Education Director DeCesaro,

Thank you for the work you do for the people of this great country. We greatly appreciate all work that puts America and its people first.

I am emailing asking for you to please confirm Linda McMahon to lead the Department of Education. Ms. McMahon can see very clearly what the Department of Education has become and what is needed here. Her long history shows that she will fight for the best education possible for students.

She has served in education for twenty years. Her service has included serving on the Connecticut School Board and on the board of Sacred Heart University, along with so much more.

Above all, she will dare to think differently and act boldly at the Department of Education, and that is exactly what we need in this position. She will use her unique experience, skills and viewpoints to approach problems in unconventional ways. She is ready to act the day she is approved.

Thank you for confirming the very well qualified Linda McMahon.

Best Regards,

Kimberly Poteat

(HELP Committee)

From: [Faint text]
Sent: [Faint text]
To: [Faint text]
Cc: [Faint text]
Subject: [Faint text]

Please confirm Linda McMahon for the US Secretary of Education. She will be a great asset and stand for the best possible education for students!

Thank you

Kris Pack

(HELP Committee)

From: Linda McMahon [mailto:Linda.McMahon@ed.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 1, 2008 10:00 AM
To: Jane Horning [mailto:jhorning@blackmountain.edu]
Subject: Linda McMahon - US Secretary of Education

Please confirm Linda McMahon as the US Secretary of Education. Thank you!

Jane Horning
Black Mountain, NC

(HELP Committee)

From: [Redacted]
Sent: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: [Redacted]

Dear Ms. Armstrong and Ms. DeCesaro,

I write to support the confirmation of Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education. Our country needs education reform for our children, and parents need a strong voice in the discussions. Ms. McMahon will be the parents' rights advocate that our school children need and deserve.

Sincerely,
Amy Cornell

(HELP Committee) [\[Redacted\]](#)

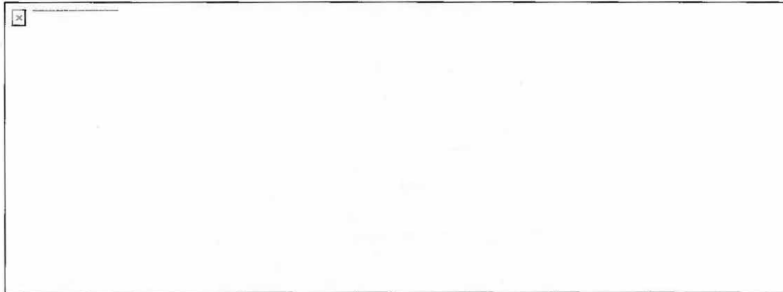
From: [\[Redacted\]](#)
Sent: [\[Redacted\]](#)
To: [\[Redacted\]](#)
Cc: [\[Redacted\]](#)
Subject: [\[Redacted\]](#)

Hi!
I am a Texas Mom and parental rights' advocate.
I support Linda McMahon for education secretary. I am very excited for President Trump and Mrs. McMahon to improve public education for America's children.
I pray that her confirmation is soon and approved, so she can get to work helping our children.
Thank you!

From, Tara Petsch

From: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Subject: [Redacted]

From:
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 2:34:06 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To:
Subject: Letter to Senator Bill Cassidy



Senator Bill Cassidy
828 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate

Dear Senator Cassidy,

I strongly support Linda McMahon's nomination as Secretary of Education. As a champion of parental rights, she expanded universal school choice to 12 states and fought for curriculum transparency and patriotic education. Her commitment to returning education decisions to states, aligning education with workforce needs, and holding school boards accountable ensures a brighter future for America's children. Linda's proven leadership and dedication to empowering families make her uniquely qualified to transform our education system. I urge you to confirm her and restore trust in education for parents and students nationwide.

Sincerely,
Emily Stack
Pinehurst, North Carolina

From: [Faded]
Sent: [Faded]
To: [Faded]
Subject: [Faded]

From: Staci Metcalf
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 4:00:52 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: DeCesaro, Anne (HELP Committee)
Cc:
Subject: Please confirm Linda McMahon as US Secretary of Education

January 22, 2025

To whom it may concern:

As a retired educator, I am writing to ask that Linda McMahon be confirmed as US Secretary of Education.

Our public school system is broken, failing throughout our nation. Our country needs a Secretary of Education who is not embedded with the teacher unions. We need a Secretary of Education who will rid our schools of harmful ideologies, including SEL (social-emotional learning), CRT (critical race theory), gender, and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). These ideologies harm our children and their mental well-being while creating activists who hate our country.

Public Education should produce innovators and a workforce with job skills and a strong work ethic. Currently, our public schools are producing entitled activists with little to no marketable work skills.

Our country needs Linda McMahon as US Secretary of Education. She will be the strong leader our country needs to direct the changes desperately needed at the Department of Education.

Please confirm Linda McMahon as US Secretary of Education.

Sincerely,

Staci Metcalf
Retired Educator
Fletcher, North Carolina

(HELP Committee)

From: Karen Fulton
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2025 2:38:28 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Armstrong, Rebekah (HELP Committee); DeCesaro, Anne (HELP Committee)
Subject: please read into the record

From: Karen Fulton
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2025 2:38:28 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Armstrong, Rebekah (HELP Committee); DeCesaro, Anne (HELP Committee)
Subject: please read into the record

Brevard Florida Moms for Liberty
 Indian Harbour Beach, Florida 32937
 February 12, 2025

Dear Members of the US Senate,

On behalf of the members of the Brevard, Florida Chapter of Moms for Liberty, we are honored to express our support for Linda McMahon's nomination as Secretary of Education. We believe that Linda's appointment will be instrumental in ending:

- Ideological indoctrination in classrooms, ensuring education remains focused on critical thinking and educational achievements.
- The overreach of teachers' unions that prioritize political agendas over student success and parental involvement.
- Federal overregulation that strips local communities of control over their children's education.

This endorsement reflects our unwavering commitment to advocating for parental rights, government transparency, and a high-quality education system that serves the best interests of every child in America.

Moms for Liberty is a grassroots organization dedicated to empowering parents to take an active role in their children's education and ensuring that our schools reflect the values of accountability, excellence, and local control. We believe that families must be central to educational decision-making and that a strong partnership between parents and schools is essential for student success.

Linda McMahon's record of leadership, innovation, and dedication to fostering opportunities for families and communities speaks for itself. This is not a new area of focus for McMahon: At the height of her business success, she made it her priority to develop the Get R.E.A.L. program literacy initiative. Now, at a time when our education system faces critical challenges, including record-low literacy rates, McMahon is ready to step up with unwavering dedication to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive, and that education remains a fundamental pillar of our nation's strength and future.

We are confident she will draw from her success as a business leader and former role as the head of the Small Business Administration, as she faces these complex challenges. We expect she will implement solutions that will streamline the Department of Education and keep the government bureaucracy laser-focused on its core mission while returning control to local communities.

We urge you to support Linda McMahon's nomination as Secretary of Education. Thank you for considering our endorsement. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you require further information or support.

Sincerely,

Karen Fulton Chapter Chair
 Brevard County, Florida

(HELP Committee)

From: [Redacted]
Sent: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
Subject: [Redacted]

From: jeffrey trull
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 8:32:47 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: DeCesaro, Anne (HELP Committee)
Subject: Please support Linda

I support Linda McMahon to take position as US Secretary of Education.

jeffrey trull

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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