

Summary of

The U.S. Department of Education's Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After One Year (April 2017)

DC Vouchers Negatively Affect Student Academic Achievement

- Students in the voucher program performed worse in math than students who were not offered a voucher.
- Students in grades K-5 who participated in the voucher program performed worse in both math and reading than students who were not offered a voucher.
- Students previously attending non-failing public schools who participated in the voucher program performed worse in both math and reading than students who were not offered a voucher.

Examining Sub-Sections of Students Further Reveals the Program's Negative Impacts

- There was a statistically significant negative impact on math achievement for:
 - Students overall who used a voucher (7.3% points)
 - Students in grades K-5 who used a voucher (14.7% points)
 - Students who did not attend a schools in need of improvement (non-SINI school) at the time of applying to the voucher program and used a voucher (18.3% points)
 - Students who had lower achievement scores in reading at the time of applying to the voucher program and used a voucher (9.8% points)
- There was a statistically significant negative impact on reading achievement for:
 - Students in grades K-5 who used a voucher (9.3% points)
 - Students who did not attend a school in need of improvement (non-SINI school) at the time of applying to the voucher program and used a voucher (14.6% points)
- There was a negative – even if not a statistically significant negative – impact for every demographic of student studied, with the exception of students in grades 6-12. However, none of the positive impacts for students in grades 6-12 were statistically significant.
- Elementary students in grades K-5 were the largest group measured by the study (68% of participants), and they had statistically significant negative scores in both reading and math.

DC Vouchers Do Not Provide Greater School Satisfaction or More Parental Involvement

- The program had no statistically significant impact on parents' or students' general satisfaction with the school the child attended in that first year.
- The program had no statistically significant impact on students' perceptions of safety at their school in that first year.
- The program had no a statistically significant impact on the involvement of parents in the education of their child who was offered or used a voucher in that first year

Negative Student Achievement Results May Be Due to Less Instruction Time Provided to Students in DC Voucher Schools

- The researchers determined that the study results cannot be dismissed with claims that the students not in the voucher program (the control group, which included students who were not offered a voucher) attended higher-performing DC public schools that the students in the program (the treatment group, which included students who were offered or used a voucher): Evidence showed that "the study's control group students were attending average DC schools."
- The study also determined that the study results cannot be dismissed with claims that the students in the program performed worse because they were adjusting to a new school: "There was no statistically significant association between changing schools and student achievement in reading and mathematics."
- The study did find that students who were not in the voucher program group received more instruction time in both reading and math than students who were in the program.
 - Students not in the program in grades K-5 received 65.5 minutes more per week in reading and 48.3 minutes more per week in math.
 - The differences were smaller for students in the program in grades 6-12: 26.9 minutes more per week in reading and 48.9 minutes more per week in math.

DC Vouchers Are Not Popular

- Thirty percent of students offered a voucher failed to use them.



The **National Coalition for Public Education** comprises more than 50 education, civic, civil rights, and religious organizations devoted to the support of public schools. Founded in 1978, NCPE opposes the funnelling of public money to private and religious schools through such mechanisms as tuition tax credits and vouchers.