

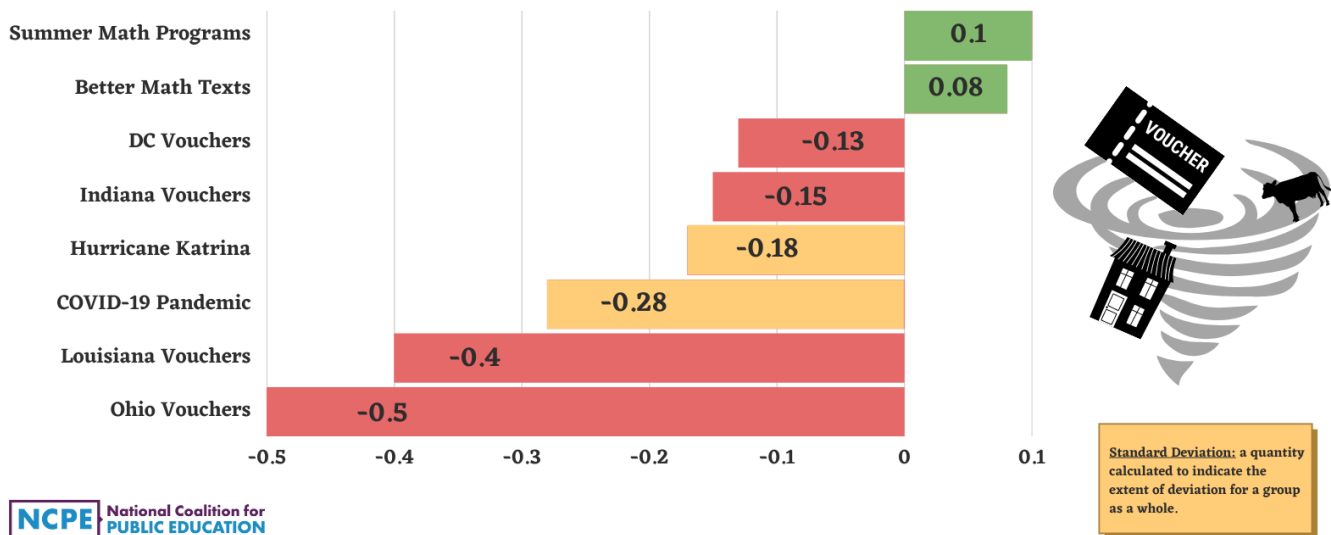
Vouchers Harm Student Achievement As Much As Natural Disasters

Private school vouchers fail on the most basic measure: they do not improve students’ academic achievement. Indeed, they often cause students to perform worse than their peers who choose not to accept vouchers and remain in public schools. In the view of one leading education policy researcher: “vouchers have some of the worst results in the history of education research.”¹

Recent, long-term studies of the Louisiana, Indiana, Ohio, and Washington, DC, programs show that voucher students experienced significant declines in their academic performance.² The impact of accepting a voucher on math scores in these voucher programs rivals or even exceeds the learning loss caused by Hurricane Katrina and the COVID-19 pandemic.³

In other words, vouchers have a similar negative impact on a students’ math performance as months-long school closures caused by natural disasters.

Voucher Impacts on Student Outcomes As Harmful as Natural Disasters (Measured in Standard Deviation)



Sources: <https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/research/evaluation-ohio-edchoice-scholarship-program-selection-competition-and-performance/>
<https://www.aceweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20160634>
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2022/03/03/the-pandemic-has-had-devastating-impacts-on-learning-what-will-it-take-to-help-students-catch-up/>
https://online.library.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pam.22886?casa_token=hW1MiwAu9RAAAAAS3AKTaPuc8KkVFTyTtFDQY77qABZtCHpLVWU8wCWNzK4_3Dye-1-d4dSGNY_K2KCap5vfmVL_y80E
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20084023/participation.asp>
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/highly-negative-impacts-vouchers/>
<https://www.iber.org/papers/w24428>
<https://cepr.org/venues/columns/replicating-successful-charter-schools-boston>

¹ Joshua Cowen, [Dark Money Vouchers Are Having A Moment](#), *CounterPunch* (Jan. 15, 2024).
² R. Joseph Waddington & Mark Berends, [Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary & Middle School](#), *37 J. of Policy Analysis & Mgmt.* 4, 738-808 (Aug. 2018); Atila Abdulkadiroğlu, Parag A. Pathak & Christopher R. Walters, [Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?](#), *10 Am. Econ. Journal: Applied Econ.* 1, 175-206 (Jan. 2018); David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, [Evaluation of Ohio’s EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, & Performance Effects](#), *Fordham Inst.* (July 2016); U.S. Dep’t of Educ., [Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied](#) (June 2018).
³ [Voucher Impacts on Student Outcomes As Harmful As Natural Disasters \(Measured in Standard Deviation\)](#), National Coalition for Public Education (2023).

Why are the academic results of vouchers so bad?

It's important to note that most voucher students do not attend elite, private, college preparatory academies. Voucher programs mostly fund failing, low-quality private schools that pop up and eventually close. For example, forty percent of voucher-receiving schools in the longstanding Milwaukee, Wisconsin,⁴ and Washington, DC, voucher programs opened and subsequently failed and closed. In those Wisconsin pop-up schools, average survival time is just 4 years before their doors close for good.⁵

These subpar schools are propped up by taxpayer-funded voucher programs that allow them to continue operating for years despite providing a poor educational experience—such as teachers lacking certification, questionable curricula, and crumbling facilities. With little to no quality controls, and high turnover and instability, students' performance suffers.

⁴ Michael R. Ford & Fredrik O. Andersson, [Determinants of Organizational Failure in the Milwaukee School Voucher Program](#), 47 *Policy Studies J.* 4, 1048-68 (Nov. 2019).

⁵ *Id.*