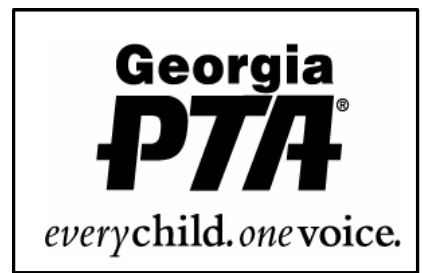




LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF GEORGIA



## **Analysis of Voucher Programs in**

Milwaukee, WI  
Cleveland, OH  
Washington, D.C.  
Florida

### **Reviewing information regarding:**

Student Eligibility  
Voucher Availability  
Dollar Value  
Receiving School Requirements  
Program Oversight  
Affects on Public Schools  
Data Summary of Test scores

## **Vouchers: Frequently Asked Questions**

March 2009



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## Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ) About Vouchers

### Q: Are Vouchers Effective?

**A:** According to studies commissioned by the Boards of Education in Ohio, Minnesota and Washington, D.C., **vouchers have little to no effect on academic achievement.** The primary report of Washington, D.C.'s voucher program revealed no positive or negative impact of the program, nor on student achievement in the areas of math and reading.<sup>1</sup> Similar test results from Cleveland show no statistically significant differences between public school and private school student's performance on state wide standardized tests.<sup>2</sup> Milwaukee has also reported mixed results and in most cases Milwaukee Public School students outscored students in the voucher program.<sup>3</sup> Even proponents of vouchers admit that vouchers have no effect, positive or negative on academic achievement.

### Q: If vouchers have little to no effect on academic achievement, why use tax dollars to fund private school education?

**A:** Proponents argue that parents are in the best position to choose where their child should be educated. While parents want what is best for their child and often cite class size or school

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Wolf, Patrick, Babette Gutmann, Michael Puma, Lou Rizzo, Nada Eissa, and Marsha Silverberg. *Evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After One Year*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007. page 67.

<sup>2</sup> Plucker, Muller, Hansen, Ravert, Makel, Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program Technical Report 1998-2004. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Available online at [http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/200602\\_Clev\\_Tech\\_Final.pdf](http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/200602_Clev_Tech_Final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> John Witte, Patrick Wolf, Joshua Cowen, David Fleming, Juanita Mclean. *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Baseline Report SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation Report #5* Department of Education Reform University of Arkansas February 2008. page 6 Available online at [http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Eval/Report\\_5.pdf](http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee_Eval/Report_5.pdf). The 4th grade MPCP students who took the WKCE on average scored 8 to 13 scale score points (equal to .16 to .29 of a standard deviation) **below** the average scores of income-disadvantaged 4th graders in MPS. MPCP students in grades 3 to 5 are currently scoring slightly lower on the math and reading portions of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) than their MPS counterparts. However, no such difference exists for students in grades 6 to 8. Benchmark Test results for 9th graders are also similar between the two groups. The differences in grades 3 to 5 are almost exclusively due to lower MPCP math scores that disappear in grades 6 to 8.

reputation as a way to help determine the ideal school, most parents do not know the specifics of what a child should be learning in first grade, in second grade, in seventh grade, etc. Georgia's Curriculum was developed by teacher teams, state and national experts, and consultants who worked for months to develop the Georgia Performance Standards. **The teams looked at national standards from high-performing states such as Michigan, Texas, and North Carolina, and nations such as Japan to come up with a curriculum to prepare our students to be competitive in the global market.** They also consulted the guidelines of national groups such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

A 2008 study by the Pew Center<sup>4</sup> rated Georgia's curriculum an overall B-. The national average rating was a C. **Georgia's performance standards, assessment and accountability rated an A- to the rest of the country's B.** The teachers were rated B versus a C for the rest of the country. The K-12 achievement was rated low but it should be noted that the Georgia Performance Standards are still in the process of being rolled out. Each subject in the Georgia curriculum was developed with input from recognized experts from around the country and around the world.

Private school curriculums are not subject to evaluation and parents have little access to specific curriculum standards.

### **Q. Will a voucher program leave more money for public schools?**

**A.** A voucher program will mean less money for public schools. Public education in Georgia is funded through a combination of local tax revenues (the local portion) and funds from the State education budget (the State portion). The State funds are calculated use the QBE formula and

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<sup>4</sup> published in *Education Week in Quality Counts* 2008.

allocated based on the FTE count at each school. When private schools are involved, SB 90 would divert the State funding portion for a student from public schools to private schools. Voucher advocates argue that there will be an increase in funds per pupil because SB 90 will allow school districts to retain the local tax revenues generated by voucher students. That, however, will not make up for the loss of state funds, and the public school system will have less money overall. **A school typically loses only a handful of students which isn't enough to reduce the teacher count, maintenance costs, transportation costs, or any of the other fixed costs that the State funds help cover.** Thus there will be less State funds to cover the total fixed costs spent running a school. This will be especially detrimental and unfair for many of Georgia's smaller, poorer counties, where State funds comprise up to 60 percent of the total funding.

Unless a significant amount of students - all in the same grade and from the same district - exit the public school system at the same time, vouchers will not help public schools reduce cost of operations. Instead, public schools will still have to pay the same amount for teachers, administrative staff, transportation, and building maintenance, but will have less money to do so. This, in turn, will force public schools to make serious decisions that in some cases will lead to cutting services. As quoted by former Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Spence Korte on how vouchers affect public schools: "If we have 165 schools in the district...and lose all the kids from one school, that's not a problem. What we do is lose a little bit everywhere, instead of being able to lose it in such a way that we can consolidate in a particular building. **We don't heat the building two degrees less because a few students went to a choice program.**"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Egan, Marcus. "Setting the Record Straight." Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers Are a Bad Idea. 30 May 2003. National School Board Association. 23 Feb 2009

## **Q. How will private schools account for tax payer dollars?**

**A.** Privates schools will not be held accountable for how tax dollars are spent. **There is no demand in SB 90 for any public accounting of the use of citizens' tax dollars.** In fact, the bill asserts that “the creation of the program shall not be construed to expand the regulatory authority of the state, its officers, or any local school system to impose any additional regulation of nonpublic schools beyond those reasonably necessary to enforce the requirements of this article.” Unfortunately, the “requirements of this article” nowhere mention any need to abide by the Transparency in Government Act or anything remotely similar. Without accountability measures, the system can easily be taken advantage of. For example:

In Milwaukee

- *Exitto High School was closed in the middle of the school year while its director was charged on several criminal counts, including drug charges and embezzling funds. The school had been overpaid under the voucher program and owed the state \$88,008.*<sup>6</sup>
- *The Juanita Virgil Academy went bankrupt and closed in the middle of a school year. Parents complained about food service, lack of textbooks and materials, overcrowded classrooms, and a major lack of discipline.*<sup>7</sup>

In Florida

- *Parents complained that the W.J. Redmond Christian Academy in Palm Beach had no textbooks and that all the children, from kindergartners to 12th-graders, were lumped in one classroom.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Egan, Marcus. "How Vouchers Have Failed Studnts and Taxpayers." Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers Are a Bad Idea. 30 May 2003. National School Boards Association. <<http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/SchoolVouchers/VoucherStrategyCenter/KeepPublicEducationPublic/AppendixHowVouchersHaveFailedStudentsandTaxpayers.aspx>>

<sup>7</sup> id

In Cleveland

- *The Islamic Academy School of Arts and Sciences employed a teacher convicted of murder and operated in a dangerous run-down building. The 110-year old building had no fire alarms, no sprinkler system, broken windows, lead paint flaking off the walls at dangerous levels, and little, if any, heat in the winter.*<sup>9</sup>

### **Q. What “choices” will parents have if SB 90 becomes law?**

**A.** The choices provided by SB 90 are limited. While parents have the choice **to *apply*** to any private school, **ultimately the decision of where their child will attend rests with the receiving school. During the admissions process, private schools are allowed to discriminate on basis of gender, religion, family history, economic background, academic achievement, and special needs.** In fact, a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education of private schools in large inner-cities – like Atlanta – found that only 15 percent of schools would "definitely or probably" be willing to participate in a voucher program if they were required to accept "students with special needs such as learning disabilities, limited English proficiency or low achievement."<sup>10</sup>

**School choice is also hindered by the limited number of private schools in the state.**

This is especially true in rural areas where the number of private schools is sparse. There are also very few schools that will be fully covered by a \$5,000 voucher.<sup>11</sup> Finally, school choice lessens when religion is taken into account. The majority of the schools that are affordable at \$5,000

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<sup>8</sup> id

<sup>9</sup> id

<sup>10</sup> People for the American Way. "Voucher Veneer: The Deeper Agenda to Privatize Public Education." 26 Feb 2009 <[http://site.pfaw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=report\\_voucher\\_veneer](http://site.pfaw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=report_voucher_veneer)>.

<sup>11</sup> The League of Women Voters of Georgia is currently compiling a list of data from all the private schools in Georgia. This list contains information such as tuition cost, admissions requirements and any disclaimers concerning the school's selection processes. Of 250-300 total schools we have collected thus far, we have discovered almost no non-Christian school priced below \$5,000.

are Christian schools.<sup>12</sup> This becomes of particular concern as, unlike other states voucher programs, SB 90 does not have a clause allowing students to be exempt from all religious activities of the voucher receiving school. This severely limits choice for families of other faiths.

SB 90 does provide the choice to attend any public school within a school district or to attend a public school of choice in another district if there is space available at the receiving school.

**Q: How does a HOPE Scholarship differ from vouchers?**

A. The HOPE scholarship differs from vouchers in two key ways: first, **the HOPE scholarship is funded with dollars from the lottery and not tax payer dollars.** Second, the HOPE has accountability attached to it. A student must earn a B average in high school to earn the HOPE scholarship and must maintain a B average in college to retain it. If a student's GPA drops below a 3.0 average the student loses the scholarship.

**Q: How does SB 90 compare to other states voucher programs?**

A. Below is a chart comparing SB 90 to other state's voucher programs. The differences between SB 90 and other voucher programs are significant.

- **Georgia's voucher program applies to all students and has no statutory cap on the number of vouchers that can be awarded.**

Voucher programs in other states apply only to low income students or to students who are in failing schools or have a statutory cap on the amount of funds that can be awarded. This becomes significant when you look at the amount of state funds that can be potentially withdrawn from public schools when a child is awarded a voucher.

In GA's poorest counties, the state funds can make up to 60% of funds needed to

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<sup>12</sup> *id*

support the public school. A withdrawal of this money for even a small number of students could affect a schools' ability to hire teachers and/or pay for supplies, books and other resources necessary to educate those students who choose to remain in the public school.

- **SB 90 has no academic accountability measure.**

Florida, Cleveland, Milwaukee and Washington, D.C. require voucher students to take a statewide assessment to measure their progress against that of public school students. Along with these test results, they have also commissioned independent research to be conducted on the effectiveness of these programs. The Ontario school system, frequently cited in support of SB 90 goes so far as to require that the private and public schools teach the same curriculum and administer the same test. SB 90 has no provision governing the academic accountability of the private schools that participate in its program.

- **SB 90 does not prohibit discrimination by the private schools on the basis of religion or gender.**

Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, and Cleveland legislatively mandate that participating schools may not discriminate on the basis of religion or gender. In Milwaukee, voucher schools must accept all eligible voucher applications during each open application period so long as those students meet the household income and residency requirements. A voucher school is prohibited from using an applicant's race, ethnic background, religion, prior test scores, grades or membership in the church parish in the admissions process.<sup>13</sup> Florida required participating private schools to accept

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<sup>13</sup> Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Frequently Asked Questions – 2009-10 School Year. State of Wisconsin, Department of Instruction Website. Available online at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/doc/mpcp\\_faq\\_2009\\_01.doc](http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/doc/mpcp_faq_2009_01.doc)

voucher students on an “entirely random and religious neutral basis without regard to the student’s past academic history.”<sup>14</sup>

SB 90, however, has no prohibition against such discrimination. This is of particular concern for those students who are not Christians. The majority of the private schools in Georgia are Christian-based, and many give preferential admissions treatment to students who are of the faith and/or denomination of the school’s supporting organization.

Voucher Program	Eligibility	Amount	existing caps	Transportation Cost provided?	Religious Exemption	Achievement Measurability	Discrimination
GA SB 90	open to all GA Students who have been enrolled in GA Public Schools for a year	estimation of around \$5,000	none	no	no	none	Participating schools are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin. However, Private schools can, however, discriminate on the basis of sex, religion or disability.
Cleveland Scholarship & Tutoring Program	open to all students in the Cleveland Municipal School District with priority being given to low income students.	up to \$3,450 or the total amount of tuition whichever is lower. * A student whose household is at or below 175% of the poverty level qualifies for 90 percent of the tuition amount * A student whose household income is at or below 200 % of the poverty level qualifies for 75 % of the tuition amount	16,000 scholarships are available. If the programs becomes full, a lottery system is used to determine the recipients	yes	no	mandatory assessments had been given since the programs inception and show no statistically significant difference between public and private school student test scores. Results were published until 2004 but are no longer available for public review.	Participating Schools are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background. The participating school can not be involved in the teaching of hatred of any person on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or national origin
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program	*available to new applicants whose income is at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Level *or existing participants whose income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level	\$6,607 or the private school cost per student, whichever is less.	by statute maximum of 22,000 vouchers can be awarded	yes	yes	mandatory assessments have been given 2005 showing no statistically significant differences between public and private school students test scores.	Information about an applicant that a school may not use in the admission process for the Choice program includes but is not limited to an applicants race, ethnic background, religion, prior test scores, grades or membership in the church parish. Choice schools must accept all eligible Choice applications during each open application period the school is participating in for the 2009-10 school year. The school must, at the end of the application period, have a random drawing to pick the Choice students if there are more eligible Choice applications submitted than slots available.
DC School Voucher Program	available to low income students only	\$7,750 or the private school cost per student, whichever is less.	2,000 scholarships total	yes	no	mandatory assessments have been given since the programs inception showing no statistically significant difference between public and private school students test scores.	Participating Schools may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or sex. Students must be accepted to the schools randomly.
Florida Voucher Program	available to students in failing schools only	4206 or the private school cost, whichever was less	n/a	yes	yes	mandatory assessments given to all voucher participants	The private schools were a required to accept voucher students on an "entirely random and religious neutral basis without regard to the student's past academic history.

<sup>14</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 (4)(e): “the private school may give preference in accepting applications to siblings of students who have been already accepted on a random and religious neutral basis.

## About the Voucher Programs

### Milwaukee Voucher Program

#### Who is eligible?

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) was established in 1990. It is one of the first programs allowing parents to use vouchers to send their children to private schools. The program is open to any student residing in the Milwaukee School District who is currently attending or assigned to attend a public school and has (1) a total family income that does not exceed 1.75 times the federal poverty level or (2) any existing MPCP student whose family income does not exceed 2.2 times the federal poverty level.<sup>1516</sup> In order to receive a voucher, an eligible student must apply and be accepted to a participating private school. **Participating private schools must accept students on a random basis**, except if the applying student has siblings in the school, in which case that student can be given preference.<sup>17</sup> **Students may be exempted from participating in all religious activities at the accepting private school.**<sup>18</sup>

#### How many vouchers are available?

The MPCP funds low income students' education up to **a statutory limit of 22,500 vouchers.**<sup>19</sup> No vouchers are issued after that number is surpassed. In September 2008, there were 127 private schools participating in the MPCP, with a total student enrollment of 20,244<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>1515</sup> Wis. Stats. § 119.23(2)(a)(1)

<sup>16</sup> Milwaukee Parental Choice Program 2009-10 Income Limits available online at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/doc/mpcp\\_0910\\_income.doc](http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/doc/mpcp_0910_income.doc)

<sup>17</sup> Wis. Stats. § 119.23(3)

<sup>18</sup> Wis. Stats. § 119.23(7)(a)(4)(2)(c) (c) A private school may not require a pupil attending the private school under this section to participate in any religious activity if the pupil's parent or guardian submits to the pupil's teacher or the private school's principal a written request that the pupil be exempt from such activities

<sup>19</sup> Wis. Stats. § 119.23 (b)

<sup>20</sup> MILWAUKEE PARENTAL CHOICE PROGRAM (MPCP) MPCP Facts and Figures for 2008-2009 As of November 2008 available online at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/doc/mpcp\\_08fnf\\_2008\\_11.doc](http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/doc/mpcp_08fnf_2008_11.doc)

### **What is the total dollar amount of the voucher?**

In the 2008-09 school year, the MPCP voucher amount was set for **\$6,607 or the private school's operating and debt service cost per student, whichever is less.** The operating and debt service cost per student at the school is determined by an independent auditor,<sup>21</sup> which is then compared to the MPCP state aid amount. If the auditor finds that the actual operating budget is less than what the private school has reported, the school will owe the difference back to the state.<sup>22</sup> The program is estimated to cost \$128,836,500 in 2008-09 for an estimated 19,500 students.<sup>23</sup>

### **What are the requirements for a participating school?**

A private school interested in participating in the program must do the following:

- Comply with 42 U.S. § 2000(d) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- Meet all health and safety laws and codes that apply to public schools.
- Ensure that all teachers in the participating private school have a high school diploma or its equivalent<sup>24</sup> and
- Be accredited by one of the named accreditation organizations in the statute.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Wis. Stats § 119.23(7)(a)(4)(1)

<sup>22</sup> MPCP Facts and Figures page 1

<sup>23</sup> MPCP Facts and Figures page 1

<sup>24</sup> Wis. Stats § 119.23 (2)(a) (6) “all of the private school’s teachers have graduated from high school or been granted a declaration of equivalency of high school graduation. “

<sup>25</sup> Wis. Stats. § 119.23(2)(a)(7) 7. The private school achieves accreditation by the Wisconsin North Central Association, the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation, the Independent Schools Association of the Central States, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, or any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation, by December 31 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> school year following the first school year that begins after June 30, 2006, in which it participates in the program under this section, or the private school was approved for scholarship funding for the 2005–06 school year by Partners Advancing Values in Education.

In order to remain in the program, participating private schools are required to meet one of the following:

- Show that at least 70% of the pupils in the program advance one grade level each year,
- Maintains an average attendance rate of at least 90%,
- Required to demonstrate significant academic achievement by at least 80% of the pupils in the choice program
- Mandate that 70% of the parents in its program meet parent involvement criteria established by the private school.<sup>26</sup>

### **What kind of oversight is provided?**

With the passage of the 2005 Wisconsin Act, private schools participating in the MPCP are required to administer a nationally normed standardized test annually in reading, mathematics, and science to voucher students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The law further directs voucher schools to submit copies of the scores from those tests to the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) for processing and reporting.<sup>27</sup> **The results of these tests have shown insignificant differences between the performance of public school students and voucher receiving students.**

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<sup>26</sup> Wis. Stats§ 1119.23(7)(a)(1-4)

<sup>27</sup> Nathan Gray, Patrick Wolf and Lauren Jensen Milwaukee Longitudinal School Choice Evaluation: Annual School Testing Summary Report SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation Report #4 Fayetteville, AK. February 2008. Available online at [http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Eval/Report\\_4.pdf](http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee_Eval/Report_4.pdf)

## Cleveland Voucher Program

### Who is eligible?

In 1995, Ohio created a voucher program, entitled the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring program (CSTP) for students attending school in the Cleveland Municipal School District.<sup>28</sup> Cleveland's voucher program is available to **all students** who currently reside in the Cleveland Municipal School District, **with priority for scholarship awards given to low income students.**<sup>29</sup> Students who reside in the Cleveland Municipal School District and will be in grades K-8 for the next school year are eligible for this program.<sup>30</sup> In the 2003-2004 school year, the program was expanded to include high school students who had previously used a voucher to pay for 8<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>31</sup> Students who are currently homeschooled, as well as those currently in private schools, are also eligible for the program. The law requires, however, that half of all new vouchers be given to existing public school students.<sup>32</sup> Transportation to and from the private school is provided by the Cleveland Municipal School District.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Plucker, Muller, Hansen, Ravert, Makel, *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program Technical Report 1998-2004*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Available online at [http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/200602\\_Clev\\_Tech\\_Final.pdf](http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/200602_Clev_Tech_Final.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> See ORC § 3313.977 (c) Children from low-income families attending school or residing in the school district in which the school is located until the number of such students in each grade equals the number that constituted twenty per cent of the total number of students enrolled in the school during the preceding year in such grade. Admission of such twenty per cent shall be by lot from among all low-income family applicants who apply prior to the fifteenth day of February prior to admission.

<sup>30</sup> CSTP - Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program; Ohio Department of Education School Options Available on the Ohio Departments of Educations website at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=672&ContentID=5434&Content=63020>

<sup>31</sup> Plucker, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Fact Sheet

<sup>33</sup> ORC§ 3313.978 (A). See Also Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring 'Program 2009-2010 Policy Manual, Prepared by the Cleveland Scholarship Staff of the Center for School Options and Finance. Page 14. Available on The Ohio Department of education website at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=62526>

### **How many Vouchers are available?**

The total number of vouchers to be awarded is determined by the State Superintendent who communicates that figure to CSTP.<sup>34</sup> **Approximately 6,000 of 16,000 available vouchers are currently being used in Cleveland, Ohio.**<sup>35</sup> **The discrepancy in the number of available vouchers versus those being actually used can be attributed to the lack of available private school openings in the participating private schools.**<sup>36</sup> Vouchers are awarded to new students by subtracting the number of scholarships to be awarded to continuing students from the total number of scholarships available for that school year. The following example, taken from the Ohio Department of Education's website, is an illustration on how this is determined.

*Example:*

*The program director is informed that 6,500 scholarships will be available in school year 2006-2007. If there are 5,000 students enrolled in the program in 2005-2006, then the number of new scholarships to be awarded is 1,000, which is the difference between the total available scholarships and the number of scholarships reserved for current program participants.*<sup>37</sup>

**If there are more vouchers available than applicants, then scholarships may be awarded to all low-income applicants. However, if there are more applicants than available**

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<sup>34</sup> ORC§ 3313.978 (A). See Also Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring 'Program 2009-2010 Policy Manual, Prepared by the Cleveland Scholarship Staff of the Center for School Options and Finance. Page 14. Available on The Ohio Department of education website at

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=62526>

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Kimberly Murnieks, Center for School Options & Finance , Ohio Department of Education. Friday, February 20, 2009. 1:30pm.

<sup>36</sup> id

<sup>37</sup> Policy Manual, at 14

**scholarships, a lottery system is developed for the selection of voucher recipients.** After voucher recipients have been identified, a waiting list of applicants is developed based on receipt date of students' applications and noting public/nonpublic enrollment and income level. Students from this list will be contacted in the event students identified during the award process decline their scholarship. If slots still remain after this process, scholarships are to be made available on a first come, first-served basis.<sup>38</sup>

### **What is the total dollar amount of the voucher?**

Originally the program provided \$2,250 for students in grades K-8. However, in the 2003 school year that amount was increased to \$3,000.<sup>39</sup> Currently, the maximum amount of the voucher is \$3,450<sup>40</sup> or the total amount of the schools' tuition, whichever is lower. A student, however, does not automatically qualify for the full voucher amount. **Awards instead are based on the income level of the student's family.** The following criteria are used to determine the amount of the award

- A student whose household income is below 200 percent of poverty level qualifies for 90 percent of the tuition amount.<sup>41</sup>
- A student whose household income is above 200 percent of poverty level qualifies for 75 percent of the tuition amount.<sup>42</sup>
- Families are responsible for paying the remaining 10 to 25 percent of the tuition costs directly to the school. Parents are also responsible for any fees outside of tuition, including registration fees, material fees, and other types of fees.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *id*

<sup>39</sup> Plucker, 4. An increase was included for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders to \$2,700.

<sup>40</sup> ORC§ 3313.978 (C)

<sup>41</sup> OCR§ 3313.978

<sup>42</sup> OCR 3313.978 (A)

- No low income family whose child is in grades K-8 may be charged more than 10 percent of the legislated scholarship amount.<sup>44</sup>
- If the private schools' tuition is higher than the scholarship amount and the family's income is above 200 percent of the federal poverty level, the family may have to pay the difference, or participate in volunteer services to make up for difference in cost.<sup>45</sup>

### **What are the requirements for a participating school?**

Any private school located in the Cleveland Municipal School District or any public school outside of the district<sup>46</sup> is eligible to participate in the program. The state superintendant must approve the school before the student can enroll.<sup>47</sup> The state superintendent shall register any school that meets the following requirements:<sup>48</sup>

- The school indicates in writing its commitment to follow all requirements for a state-sponsored voucher program
- The school meets all state minimum standards for chartered nonpublic schools in effect, **including ensuring that all teachers are licensed and/or certified.**
- The school does **not discriminate** on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background;
- The school enrolls a minimum of ten students per class or a sum of at least twenty-five students in all the classes offered;

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<sup>43</sup> Factsheet

<sup>44</sup> Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Program 2009-2010 Policy Manual . Prepared by the Cleveland Scholarship Staff of the Center for School Options and Finance. Page 6. Available on The Ohio Department of education website at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=62526> page 6

<sup>45</sup> Fact Sheet.

<sup>46</sup> CSTP-Scholarship Program Requirements. Available online at

<sup>47</sup> CSTP

<sup>48</sup> ORC§ 3313.976

- The school does not advocate or foster unlawful behavior or teach hatred of any person or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion;
- The school does not provide false or misleading information about the school to parents, students, or the general public;
- For a 90% voucher, the school agrees not to charge any tuition to low-income families receiving ninety per cent of the voucher amount through the voucher program, in excess of ten per cent of the scholarship amount. The school shall permit any such tuition, at the discretion of the parent, to be satisfied by the low-income family's provision of in-kind contributions or services.
- The school agrees not to charge any tuition to low-income families receiving a seventy-five per cent voucher amount through the voucher program in excess of the difference between the actual tuition charge of the school and seventy-five per cent of the voucher. The school shall permit such tuition, at the discretion of the parent, to be satisfied by the low-income family's provision of in-kind contributions or services.
- Private Schools can “except where otherwise prohibited by federal law.... elect to admit students of only one gender and may deny admission to any separately educated student with a disability.”<sup>49</sup>
- Annually, the private school shall complete a parental information form and forward it to the President of the Board of Education. The parental information form shall provide information about the grade levels offered, the numbers of students, tuition amounts, achievement **test results**, and any sectarian or other organizational affiliations.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> OCR § 3313.977 (2)(B)

<sup>50</sup> ORC § 3313.978 (D)(2)

### **What kind of oversight is provided?**

In the spring of 1996, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) commissioned Indiana University (IU) to conduct an evaluation of the program. This data was collected from 1997 to 2004.<sup>51</sup> Voucher students are still tested, but the results of the tests are no longer available for public review.<sup>52</sup> The voucher program also mandates that CSTP has the responsibility to monitor voucher schools for compliance with state operating standards, applicable laws, and program requirements to ensure a safe and healthy environment, and to facilitate quality education for all voucher students. **Document reviews are conducted annually to ensure that teachers are certified or licensed<sup>53</sup> and that mandatory background checks have been done on the teachers.<sup>54</sup>**

### **The Washington, D.C. Voucher Program**

Adopting the notion that parents are “best equipped to make decisions for their children including the educational setting that will best serve the interest and educational needs of their child,” Congress passed the Washington, D.C. Choice Of School Act Of 2003.<sup>55</sup> This five year program is **targeted specifically towards low income children** in Washington, D.C.<sup>56</sup> with an

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<sup>51</sup> Plucker, 3

<sup>52</sup> Murnieks

<sup>53</sup> All teaching staff at participating chartered nonpublic schools must be appropriately licensed or certified ORC 3319.22 or certified in accordance with ORC 3301.071,

<sup>54</sup> All teachers and staff members of schools participating in the CSTP must undergo a mandatory criminal background check. ORC 3319.39 requires public and chartered nonpublic schools to conduct criminal background checks on individuals applying for any position that maintains care, custody or control of a child. In addition, ORC 3319.31 require the State Board of Education to conduct criminal background checks on any individual applying for teacher certification or licensure. Criminal background checks are performed by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification (BCI)

<sup>55</sup> D.C. SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003 (Title III of Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004); P.L. 108-199 Stat. 3 (2004) Sec 302.

<sup>56</sup> D.C. SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003 (Title III of Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004); P.L. 108-199 Stat. 3 (2004) 392(7)

**emphasis on students assigned to schools that are categorized as “needs improvement”, “corrective action”, or “restructuring”.**<sup>57</sup>

### **Who is Eligible?**

The D.C. Voucher program is open to students in K-8 who are residents of the District of Columbia and are **members of families whose income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level** (currently about \$34,000 for a family of four). In succeeding years, the eligibility criteria will be the same, except that the family income limit for continuing participants will be 200 percent of the federal poverty level (currently \$36,800 for a family of four).<sup>58</sup> Students who are currently enrolled in private school are also eligible to apply. However, they would not receive the priority for students enrolled in public schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring; nor would they be likely to receive the priority for students who lack the resources to take advantage of available educational options (since they already have the resources to attend a private school).<sup>59</sup>

### **How many vouchers are available?**

**There is a statutory cap of 2,000 available vouchers.** If more eligible students apply for scholarships than there are scholarships available, the applicants are picked via a lottery. Students attending Washington, D.C. public schools that have been identified, as “in need of improvement”, “corrective action”, or “restructuring” will be given a priority if a lottery is used to select voucher recipients. In addition, students and families who lack the resources to take advantage of available educational options will receive priority.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>D.C. SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003 (Title III of Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004); P.L. 108-199 Stat. 3 (2004) 303

<sup>58</sup> D.C. FAQ's

<sup>59</sup> D.C. FAQ's

<sup>60</sup> District of Columbia School Choice Incentive Program, Frequently Asked Questions. Available online at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/dcchoice/faq.html>

### **What is the dollar amount of the voucher?**

The maximum voucher amount is \$7,500, or the cost of the private school tuition, whichever is lower<sup>61</sup>. The voucher will pay for tuition, fees, and transportation expenses. **The title supporting this bill provides additional money for Washington, D.C .public schools, therefore money for scholarships is NOT being taken away from money that would normally go to public schools.**<sup>62</sup> Students electing to use their vouchers to attend schools that charge more than the \$7,500 would have to make up the difference from other sources. Voucher students might also have to pay costs associated with extracurricular activities, field trips, and the like, if those costs are not part of the usual and customary fees charged by a school to all students.<sup>63</sup>

### **What are the requirements of a participating School?**

Any private school that operates lawfully in the District of Columbia and that elects to participate in this initiative will be able to enroll scholarship students. So long as they

- Meet the applicable civil rights requirements meaning the participating school **cannot discriminate** on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or gender<sup>64 65</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> D.C. SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003 (Title III of Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004); P.L. 108-199 Stat. 3 (2004) 307

<sup>62</sup> D.C. SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003 (Title III of Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004); P.L. 108-199 Stat. 3 (2004) 302(6)

<sup>63</sup> D.C. FAQ's

<sup>64</sup> The statute does spell out that (can have single sex school or segregated by sex if it is part of your religious tenets

<sup>65</sup> D.C. SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003 (Title III of Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004); P.L. 108-199 Stat. 3 (2004)

- Provide parents of scholarship students with a report, at least once a year, describing the academic progress of the student (and the aggregate performance of other students in the school) and on the safety of the school; and
- Comply with requests for data and information required for the conduct of the independent evaluation of the program.

**What kind of oversight is provided?**

An independent research organization conducts an evaluation of the Washington, D.C. School Choice Incentive Program. Under the statute, the evaluation **will include testing of scholarship students using the same assessments that the Washington, D.C. public schools are using at the time the program begins.** The evaluation will look at such issues as:

- The academic achievement of scholarship students (compared to that of students who remain in Washington, D.C. public schools, including those who apply for scholarships but do not receive them);
- The retention, dropout, and college admissions rates of participating students (again in comparison with other Washington, D.C. students);
- The success of the program in expanding educational options for parents;
- The reasons why parents choose to have their children participate in the program;
- The impact of the program on students and public schools in the District; and
- The safety of the schools attended by voucher students, compared to other schools.

## **The Florida Voucher Program**

In 1999, Florida created a voucher program, entitled the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). This **program allowed students who were attending or assigned to attend a public school which had received an “F” rating for two out of four years to attend a public or private school of their choice.** On January 5, 2006, the Supreme Court of Florida **declared the provision allowing public funds to go toward private schools unconstitutional.** While Florida’s voucher program still exists to transfer to a public school, transferring to a private school is no longer an option.<sup>66</sup> Any references to the private school option in this section are describing the programs details before it was ruled unconstitutional.

### **Who is eligible?**

Florida’s voucher program is only available to public school students who are assigned to or are currently attending a school which has received two “F” ratings within a four year period.<sup>67</sup> For the 2009 school year, there were 23 schools that received this rating.<sup>68</sup> Students who chose the private school option were able to attend private school until 8<sup>th</sup> grade. If the public high school they were assigned to attend had a “C” rating or above, they then had to attend their assigned public high school. However, if the assigned public high school had a “D” rating or below, they could continue on in the voucher program.<sup>69</sup>

Once a public school received an “F” rating for two out of four years, they were required to notify the parent and give the parent the option of transferring to an in district public school which had a “C” rating or above or a private school. The option to attend the school with the

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<sup>66</sup> Opportunity Scholarship Program Public School Option. Florida Department of Education website. Available online at [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/files/Fast\\_Facts\\_OSP.pdf](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/files/Fast_Facts_OSP.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38(2)(a)(1)

<sup>68</sup> See OSP Eligible Schools On the Florida Department of Education Website. Available online at [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/osp\\_failing\\_schools.asp](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/osp_failing_schools.asp)

<sup>69</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 § (2)(a)(3)(b)

higher rating remained in effect until the child graduates from high school.<sup>70</sup> The parents may also choose to send the child to a higher performing public school out of the district. The cost of transporting the child to and from the higher performing public school is the responsibility of the school district.<sup>71</sup>

### **What is the total dollar amount of the voucher?**

The voucher amount that transferred to private schools ranged from \$3,074 in 1999 to \$4,206 per student in 2005, its last year in existence. **The total amount of money spent on the program in the 2005-2006 school year was \$2,982,448.**<sup>72</sup>

### **What are the requirements for a participating school?**

In order to participate in the program, a private school was required to demonstrate fiscal soundness by being in operation for at least one year and provide a statement by a certified public accountant confirming that the private school was insured and had sufficient capital to operate the school. The school was also required to comply with 42 U.S.C. § 2000(d), meet state and local health and safety codes, be accredited, ensure that its teachers had baccalaureate or higher degrees or had at least three years of teaching experience, and furnish a school profile which included student performance.<sup>73</sup>

**A private school was also required to accept voucher students on an “entirely random and religious neutral basis without regard to the student’s past academic history.”**<sup>74</sup> A private school had to accept as full tuition and fees the voucher provided by the state. This amount included both tuition cost and any cost associated with attending the school,

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<sup>70</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 (3)(a)(2)

<sup>71</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38(3)(e)

<sup>72</sup> Opportunity Scholarship Program Statistics. Available online at [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/files/Fast\\_Facts\\_OSP.pdf](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/files/Fast_Facts_OSP.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 (4)(a-g)

<sup>74</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 (4)(e): “the private school may give preference in accepting applications to siblings of students who have been already accepted on a random and religious neutral basis.

including but not limited to textbook fees, lab fees, and transportation cost.<sup>75</sup> The private school was also required to agree not to compel any voucher student “to profess a specific ideological belief, to pray or to worship.”<sup>76</sup>

**What kind of oversight is provided?**

A voucher receiving student had to remain in the program for a year and it was the obligation of the parent to ensure that the child took all statewide assessments.<sup>77</sup> The transferring public school districts were required to provide the locations and times of the assessments.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38(6)(b)

<sup>76</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 (4) (i-j)

<sup>77</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38 (5)

<sup>78</sup> Fla. Stat. § 1002.38(3)(c)

## **The Effects of Vouchers on Public Schools**

The Georgia Public Policy Foundation stated that SB 90 will have a positive fiscal impact on the public school system, because it allows for public schools to retain local tax revenues that would have otherwise been spent on students who receive vouchers. Kelly McCutchen, executive vice president of the Foundation, writes, “The result would be that every school system in Georgia would have more money available to spend on students who remain in public schools, because local public schools would be getting paid for students they no longer serve.”<sup>79</sup> This, however, is a gross oversimplification of public school expenditures. The truth is, vouchers would degrade the quality of public education, because while theoretically there may be an increase of funds per pupil from the local source of revenue, the public school system will have less money overall to maintain its existing schools and programs.

A school district would be able to enjoy significant savings under the scenario proposed by the Foundation “only if sizable numbers of students from a single grade in a single school or from a school with a small pupil population transferred out”.<sup>80</sup> Only then would it be possible for the school district to cut costs by reducing teaching and other staff positions - the most expensive item in a district's budget - and then costs for building maintenance and transportation.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> McCutchen, Kelly. "Time for Change: School Choice Will Have a Positive Fiscal Impact." 06 FEB 2009 <<http://www.gppf.org/article.asp?RT=&p=pub/Education/Choice/schoolchoice090206.htm>>.

<sup>80</sup> Egan, Marcus. "Setting the Record Straight." Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers Are a Bad Idea. 30 May 2003. National School Boards Association. <<http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/SchoolVouchers/VoucherStrategyCenter/NSBAAdvocacyToolsonVouchers/SettingtheRecordStraight.aspx>>.

<sup>81</sup> Egan, Marcus. "Setting the Record Straight." Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers Are a Bad Idea. 30 May 2003. National School Boards Association. <<http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/SchoolVouchers/VoucherStrategyCenter/NSBAAdvocacyToolsonVouchers/SettingtheRecordStraight.aspx>>.

That scenario, however, is extremely unrealistic, and McCutchen himself acknowledges, “Experience suggests there will not be a mass exodus from public schools.”<sup>82</sup> Hypothetically, that is not even possible, as there is a limited number of open spaces in private schools. A 1999 study by KPMG demonstrates what is more likely to happen. The study found that students who left Cleveland's public schools “were drawn from throughout the district” and the reduction in students was negligible at the individual school level.<sup>83</sup> A study by the Center of Reinventing Public Education found that “school districts that lose a small proportion of their students to voucher programs are seldom able to reduce their central administrative overhead costs,” as was the case in Cleveland.<sup>84</sup> The schools had to operate with less public aid even though the demands on the schools remained the same. That is unreasonable, and harms the effectiveness of public schools.

Milwaukee public schools have also been disproportionately burdened as a result of funding a voucher program. Milwaukee School Board member Terry Falk said, “Cutting the budget is not as easy as many people think. Declining enrollment does not mean declining expenses, and steps such as closing more schools are not as simple or wise as they might seem at first.”<sup>85</sup> Taxpayers in Milwaukee have been forced repeatedly to pay higher property taxes since the creation of the voucher program to ensure adequate funding for the city’s public schools. Last

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<sup>82</sup> McCutchen, Kelly. "Time for Change: School Choice Will Have a Positive Fiscal Impact." 06 FEB 2009 22 Feb 2009 <<http://www.gppf.org/article.asp?RT=&p=pub/Education/Choice/schoolchoice090206.htm>>.

<sup>83</sup> Egan, Marcus. "Setting the Record Straight." Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers Are a Bad Idea. 30 May 2003. National School Board Association. <<http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/SchoolVouchers/VoucherStrategyCenter/NSBAAdvocacyToolsonVouchers/SettingtheRecordStraight.aspx>>.

<sup>84</sup> Hill, Paul. "Administrative Costs of Education Voucher Programs." SEPT 2003 22 Feb 2009 <[http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr\\_files/pub\\_crpe\\_adcosts\\_sep03.pdf](http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr_files/pub_crpe_adcosts_sep03.pdf)>.

<sup>85</sup> Borsuk, Alan. "MPS property tax levy expected to rise 14.9%." Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 4 July 2008 23 Feb 2009 <<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/29423264.html>>.

July, a tentative Milwaukee Public School budget for the 2008-09 school year called for a 1.5% spending increase that would require property taxes to be raised to a whopping 14.9%.<sup>86</sup>

Former Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Spence Korte had this to say on how voucher affect public schools: "If we have 165 schools in the district...and lose all the kids from one school, that's not a problem. What we do is lose a little bit everywhere, instead of being able to lose it in such a way that we can consolidate in a particular building. We don't heat the building two degrees less because a few students went to a choice program."<sup>87</sup>

Dennis Oulahan, President of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, shared similar sentiments when he testified in front of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Education Reform in 2008. According to Oulahan, "The voucher program has been detrimental to the majority of children in Milwaukee who attend Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). It has created a drain on MPS' budget and has led to cuts in important programs and services that our students depend on."<sup>88</sup> He said that "the only competition is for resources" and that since the private school voucher program began, MPS has seen a decline in the services it has been able to provide through educational assistants, guidance counselors, social workers, nurses and other specialists. Even the highest performing public schools in Milwaukee have been forced to increase class sizes - sometimes up to 40 students - and students have to share desks, textbooks, computers, and other materials. As for meeting the needs of students with special needs, he said that "some cases [were] unmanageable."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Borsuk, Alan. "MPS property tax levy expected to rise 14.9%." Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 4 July 2008 23 Feb 2009 <<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/29423264.html>>.

<sup>87</sup> Egan, Marcus. "Setting the Record Straight." Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers Are a Bad Idea. 30 May 2003. National School Board Association. 23 Feb 2009

<sup>88</sup> "MTEA President Urges Against Voucher Program Expansion ." Wisconsin Education Association Council 10 January 2008 <[http://www.weac.org/news\\_and\\_publications/at\\_the\\_capitol/archives/2007-2008/637.aspx](http://www.weac.org/news_and_publications/at_the_capitol/archives/2007-2008/637.aspx)>.

<sup>89</sup> "MTEA President Urges Against Voucher Program Expansion ." Wisconsin Education Association Council 10 January 2008 <[http://www.weac.org/news\\_and\\_publications/at\\_the\\_capitol/archives/2007-2008/637.aspx](http://www.weac.org/news_and_publications/at_the_capitol/archives/2007-2008/637.aspx)>.

The same study by the Center of Reinventing Public Education also points out the additional costs that will be placed on public schools, which have so far not been discussed. Instating a voucher programs would require public schools to “transfer student records, re-allocate categorical program funding, re-structure public schools that had lost large numbers of students, and prepare to accept disillusioned voucher students back into the public schools.”<sup>90</sup> Taking all these factors into consideration, it is plain to see that vouchers would have an adverse affect on public schools in Georgia.

\* It should be noted that the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program was designed to have no effect on the funding of public schools in that city. Unlike Cleveland and Milwaukee, the D.C. program allots "additional money for the District of Columbia public schools and therefore money for [vouchers] is not being taken out of money that would otherwise go to the District of Columbia public schools."

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<sup>90</sup> Hill, Paul. "Administrative Costs of Education Voucher Programs." SEPT 2003 22 Feb 2009 <[http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr\\_files/pub\\_crpe\\_adcosts\\_sep03.pdf](http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr_files/pub_crpe_adcosts_sep03.pdf)>.

## The Effects of Vouchers on Test Scores.

Vouchers have little to no statistically significant effect on the test scores of public school students or private school voucher students. This information has been drawn from a study of two different municipal school voucher programs: Cleveland, Ohio and Milwaukee, Wisconsin and one federally funded program; Washington, D.C.<sup>91</sup> Each of these areas commissioned its own study of the effectiveness of its voucher programs on academic achievement. The results of these government commissioned studies are included in this report.

### Summary of Findings

#### **Cleveland, Ohio:**

- Voucher participants' scores are overall higher than public school students. At the beginning of the study, overall achievement differed significantly between voucher participants and public school students, however **the difference becomes insignificant between the Spring 1999-Spring of 2003.**

#### **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

- Voucher students in grades 3 to 5 are currently scoring **slightly lower** on the math and reading portions of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) than their Milwaukee public schools counterparts. However, no such difference exists for students in grades 6 to 8.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Although there are roughly 12 voucher programs across the United States, we focused on these areas as they are the only voucher programs that have administered mandatory testing to all their private school participants and have released the results in a public report.

## **Washington, D.C.**

- The Washington, D.C. voucher program generated **no statistically significant impact**, positive or negative, on student reading or math achievement
- . The analysis indicates that the outcome test scores of the treatment group (voucher), on average, were not significantly different from those of the control group (public school group) in the first year (table 4-1).

## **The Effects of Vouchers in Cleveland**

In 1995, Ohio began the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program (CSTP) for children attending school in the Cleveland Municipal School District.<sup>93</sup> Starting in the spring of 1996, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) commissioned Indiana University (IU) to conduct an evaluation of the program. This data has been collected from 1997 to 2004.<sup>94</sup> The information included in this section highlights the findings of this evaluation.

The Terra Nova (CTB/MCGRAW Hill) assessment has been used to measure academic achievement of students participating in the Cleveland Scholarship program in the areas of reading, language arts, and math.<sup>95</sup> As may be noted from table 21 below, voucher participants' scores are overall higher than public school students. At the beginning of the study, overall achievement differed significantly between scholarship participants and public school students, however the difference becomes insignificant between the spring of 1999-spring of 2003. By spring of 2004, however, the differences become much more significant.<sup>96</sup> Students in graders 3

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<sup>93</sup> Plucker, Muller, Hansen, Ravert, Makel, *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program Technical Report 1998-2004*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Available online at [http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/200602\\_Clev\\_Tech\\_Final.pdf](http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/200602_Clev_Tech_Final.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Plucker, 3

<sup>95</sup> Plucker, 11

<sup>96</sup> Plucker 61

thru 6 were also administered a test in Science and Social Studies. The results of the Science and Social Studies test are similar to those in the areas of Math, Language Arts and Reading. The following observations are evidenced in the results displayed in the tables below.

- At the beginning of first grade in the fall of 1998, students who continued to use a voucher to attend private schools had higher achievement scores than did students in both of the public school comparison groups in all of the four available achievement measures: overall, reading, language arts and mathematics. By the end of first grade (Spring 1999), there was no longer any statistically significant difference in students' achievement scores in the above four areas.<sup>97</sup>
- By the end of second grade (Spring 2000), scores across the three comparison groups were found to be different in only the subject area of language arts. Students that received vouchers outperformed both applicant non-recipients and non-applicants groups in language arts scores continued through the sixth grade 2004.
- No difference was found across groups in overall, reading, or mathematics scores for the duration of Spring 2000 through Spring 2003. By the end of sixth grade, Spring, 2004, voucher students exhibited scores better than both public school comparison groups in all areas except mathematics and except in comparison to applicant non-recipients in science. These differences are statistically significant at a level of 0.05 percent.

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<sup>97</sup> Plucker, 75

TABLE 21. Overall Achievement: Early First Grade (Fall 1998) to Late Sixth Grade (Spring 2004)

		Mean Overall Achievement by Assessment Period							
Student Group		Fall 1st Grade 1998	Spring 1st Grade 1999	Spring 2nd Grade 2000	Spring 3rd Grade 2001	Spring 4th Grade 2002	Spring 5th Grade 2003	Spring 6th Grade 2004	Marginal means (group)
Seven-year scholarship recipient-users (n=197)	Unadjusted mean	537	555	587	615	632	643	654	603
	SD	28	30	32	33	33	32	33	--
	Adjusted Mean	534	551	584	612	628	640	651	600
Public applicant non-recipients (n=259)	Unadjusted mean	522	546	577	605	620	636	639	592
	SD	31	34	32	33	38	33	40	--
	Adjusted Mean	524	548	579	606	622	638	641	594
Public non-applicants (n=343)	Unadjusted Mean	521	548	580	607	624	636	638	593
	SD	30	33	30	34	38	38	41	--
	Adjusted Mean	522	549	580	607	625	636	638	594

		Mean Reading Achievement by Assessment Period							
Student Group		Fall 1st Grade 1998	Spring 1st Grade 1999	Spring 2nd Grade 2000	Spring 3rd Grade 2001	Spring 4th Grade 2002	Spring 5th Grade 2003	Spring 6th Grade 2004	Marginal means (group)
Seven-year scholarship recipient-users (n=197)	Unadjusted mean	550	568	603	624	639	644	655	612
	SD	34	38	34	39	35	39	33	--
	Adjusted Mean	547	565	601	622	636	641	652	609
Public applicant non-recipients (n=259)	Unadjusted mean	536	564	596	614	628	640	641	603
	SD	37	37	35	37	42	37	41	--
	Adjusted Mean	538	566	598	615	630	642	643	605
Public non-applicants (n=343)	Unadjusted Mean	533	563	597	615	631	637	632	601
	SD	38	38	34	41	43	45	43	--
	Adjusted Mean	533	564	597	615	632	638	639	603

**TABLE 25.** Language Arts Achievement: Early First Grade (Fall 1998) to Late Sixth Grade (Spring 2004)

		Mean Language Arts Achievement by Assessment Period							
Student Group		Fall 1st Grade 1998	Spring 1st Grade 1999	Spring 2nd Grade 2000	Spring 3rd Grade 2001	Spring 4th Grade 2002	Spring 5th Grade 2003	Spring 6th Grade 2004	Marginal means (group)
Seven-year scholarship recipient-users (n=197)	Unadjusted mean	557	572	600	620	637	649	657	613
	SD	36	39	42	35	36	38	39	--
	Adjusted Mean	553	568	597	618	634	647	654	599
Public applicant non-recipients (n=259)	Unadjusted mean	542	560	585	609	622	636	636	599
	SD	38	43	37	33	42	36	43	--
	Adjusted Mean	544	562	586	610	624	637	638	600
Public non-applicants (n=343)	Unadjusted Mean	540	565	588	610	625	636	635	600
	SD	39	40	33	35	36	42	43	--
	Adjusted Mean	541	565	589	610	625	636	635	600

**TABLE 27.** Mathematics Achievement: Early First Grade (Fall 1998) to Late Sixth Grade (Spring 2004)

		Mean Mathematics Achievement by Assessment Period							
Student Group		Fall 1st Grade 1998	Spring 1st Grade 1999	Spring 2nd Grade 2000	Spring 3rd Grade 2001	Spring 4th Grade 2002	Spring 5th Grade 2003	Spring 6th Grade 2004	Marginal means (group)
Seven-year scholarship recipient-users (n=197)	Unadjusted mean	506	524	558	600	619	636	652	585
	SD	34	32	35	37	41	34	40	--
	Adjusted Mean	502	521	554	597	615	633	648	581

		Mean Mathematics Achievement by Assessment Period							
Student Group		Fall 1st Grade 1998	Spring 1st Grade 1999	Spring 2nd Grade 2000	Spring 3rd Grade 2001	Spring 4th Grade 2002	Spring 5th Grade 2003	Spring 6th Grade 2004	Marginal means (group)
Public applicant non-recipients (n=259)	Unadjusted mean	489	504	550	592	610	632	639	575
	SD	33	39	37	40	47	42	52	--
	Adjusted Mean	491	516	551	594	612	634	642	577
Public non-applicants (n=343)	Unadjusted Mean	491	517	554	597	617	635	640	579
	SD	31	39	37	40	48	43	55	--
	Adjusted Mean	491	517	555	597	617	635	640	579

### **The Effects of Vouchers on test scores in Milwaukee**

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) was established in 1990. It was one of the first programs allowing parents to use public funds to send their children to private schools. When the program was first administered, it did not require statewide testing to be conducted on the MPCP students, however with the passage of 2005 Wisconsin Act 125, private schools participating in the MPCP are now required to administer a nationally normed standardized test annually in reading, mathematics, and science to their MPCP (a.k.a. “Choice”) students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The law further directs voucher schools to submit copies of the scores from those tests to the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) for processing and reporting to the Legislative Audit.<sup>98</sup> Included in this report are the results of this study.

The study compares the test scores of MPCP students to similarly income disadvantaged students in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) who took the same test and finds the following:

<sup>98</sup> Nathan Gray, Patrick Wolf and Lauren Jensen Milwaukee Longitudinal School Choice Evaluation: Annual School Testing Summary Report SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation Report #4 Fayetteville, AK. February 2008. Available online at [http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Eval/Report\\_4.pdf](http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee_Eval/Report_4.pdf)

- The 4th grade MPCP students who took the WKCE on average scored 8 to 13 scale score points (equal to .16 to .29 of a standard deviation) below the average scores of income-disadvantaged 4th graders in MPS.
- The 8th grade MPCP students who took the WKCE, however, performed better than their MPS counterparts by 6 to 9 scale score points (.14 to .17 of a standard deviation).
- Only 61 Choice students in 10th grade took the WKCE, too few to generate reliable performance results.
- MPCP students in grades 3 to 5 are currently scoring slightly lower on the math and reading portions of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) than their MPS counterparts. However, no such difference exists for students in grades 6 to 8. Test results for 9th graders are also similar between the two groups. The differences in grades 3 to 5 are almost exclusively due to lower MPCP math scores that disappear in grades 6 to 8.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> John Witte, Patrick Wolf, Joshua Cowen, David Fleming, Juanita Mclean. *MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study Baseline Report SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation Report #5* Department of Education Reform University of Arkansas February 2008. page 6 Available online at [http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Eval/Report\\_5.pdf](http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee_Eval/Report_5.pdf)

**Table 2: Sample WKCE Scores (Grades 3-8), 2006-07**

Grade	Sample	N	Mean Reading Scale Score	Reading SD	Mean Math Scale Score	Math SD	Combined Mean Scale	Combined SD
3	MPCP	341	427.9	44.1	380.5	48.1	404.1	42.6
3	MPS-Matched	341	429.9	42.9	390.1**	47.8	410.1*	41.1
3	MPS-Random	341	440.3***	38.2	401.8***	49.8	421.7***	40.3
4	MPCP	324	436.0	49.4	414.8	49.8	425.3	44.7
4	MPS-Matched	324	437.5	49.8	423.0**	49.9	430.0	45.2
4	MPS-Random	324	447.2***	53.3	434.4***	46.6	440.8***	46.5
5	MPCP	338	441.8	47.2	437.9	43.2	439.6	41.9
5	MPS-Matched	338	440.6	51.1	444.6**	41.5	442.7	41.0
5	MPS-Random	338	448.2	56.4	452.4***	44.3	450.8	46.7
6	MPCP	330	463.7	48.4	467.5	38.5	465.4	39.8
6	MPS-Matched	330	466.3	50.0	471.5	42.5	468.9	41.4
6	MPS-Random	330	464.3	54.3	469.4	43.7	467.9	43.8
7	MPCP	303	472.0	51.0	492.1	44.9	481.3	46.6
7	MPS-Matched	303	467.9	49.8	494.2	41.9	481.1	42.5
7	MPS-Random	303	476.7	48.9	498.6*	46.5	488.1*	44.0
8	MPCP	290	487.2	53.9	495.9	42.9	490.7	44.0
8	MPS-Matched	290	483.6	58.8	500.3	46.6	492.2	47.6
8	MPS-Random	290	488.4	55.3	497.3	50.1	493.0	49.5
TOTAL	MPCP	1926	453.5	53.1	445.7	61.1	449.4	53.0
TOTAL	MPS-Matched	1926	453.5	53.9	452.1***	59.6	453.0**	51.8
TOTAL	MPS-Random	1926	460.0***	54.0	457.2***	58.0	459.2***	51.6

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**The Effects of Vouchers on Test Scores in Washington, D.C.**

In 2003, the United States Congress passed the District of Columbia School Choice Incentive Act, allowing low income students to utilize a voucher to attend a participating private school in Washington, D.C.<sup>101</sup> In establishing this voucher program, Congress required an independent evaluation that uses “the strongest possible research design for determining the

<sup>100</sup> Witte, 16

<sup>101</sup> Wolf, Patrick, Babette Gutmann, Michael Puma, Lou Rizzo, Nada Eissa, and Marsha Silverberg. *Evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After One Year*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007.

effectiveness” of the Program.<sup>102</sup> Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES) was responsible for the mandated evaluation.<sup>103</sup> The results of such evaluation included the following:

- The main models indicate that the Program generated no statistically significant impacts, positive or negative, on student reading or math achievement for the entire impact sample in year 1. The analysis indicates that the outcome test scores of the treatment group, on average, were not significantly different from those of the control group in the first year (table 4-1).<sup>104</sup>
- The average impact sample student at the time of application had a reading scale score of 608 and a math scale score of 588, which equate to the 33rd National Percentile Rank (NPR) in reading and the 31st NPR in math.

**Table 4-1. Year 1 Test Score ITT Impacts**

Student Achievement	Regression-Based Impact Estimates				
	Treatment Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Difference (Estimated Impact)	Effect Size	p-value
Reading	606.20	605.18	1.03	.03	.56
Math	595.61	592.87	2.74	.08	.07

NOTE: Means are regression-adjusted using a consistent set of baseline covariates. Impacts are displayed in terms of scale scores. Effect sizes are displayed in terms of standard deviations of the study control group distribution. Valid N for reading = 1,649; math = 1,715. Separate reading and math sample weights used.

- 105
- Vouchers may have had an impact on math achievement for two subgroups of students with baseline characteristics associated with better academic preparation. The main models suggest that the voucher programs improved the math achievement of participating students by 4.7 scale score points and increased the math scores of those

<sup>102</sup> Wolf, 6

<sup>103</sup> Wolf, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Wolf, 44

<sup>105</sup> Control is the group of students who are attending a public school whereas treatment group are those students attending a private school with a government funded voucher.

with relatively higher test score performance at baseline by 4.3 scale score points.

However, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as adjustments for multiple comparisons suggested they may be false discoveries.

- No significant achievement impacts were observed for other subgroups of participating students, including those with lower test scores at baseline, girls, boys, elementary students, secondary students, or students within each of the individual cohorts that in combination made up the impact sample.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Wolf, xviii

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