



## Newly Updated Report Collects Empirical Evidence of the Benefits of Education Choice

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### **In-Depth Review Of 169 Empirical Studies**

EdChoice, one of the national leaders in education choice advocacy and research, has released a new, updated “in-depth review of the available research on private school choice programs in America.”

*The 123s of School Choice*, originally published in 2019 and updated this May, gathers information from 169 empirical studies on choice programs—vouchers, education savings accounts (ESAs), tax-credit scholarships—published from 1998 to March 2019. The report breaks these studies down into seven categories in two separate groups.

The first group covers the personal benefits children and families utilizing choice programs experience. This includes participant test scores, participant educational attainment (whether they are more likely to graduate high school and attend college), and parental satisfaction. Of the 17 studies on test scores, only three show any negative effect from the program in question, and 11 show a positive effect on test scores. Five of the seven studies on educational attainment show positive results, while two find no visible effect. Of 30 studies on parental satisfaction, 28 find choice parents are more satisfied with their choice school than their previous school.

The second group covers the community and societal benefits of choice programs. This includes the fiscal effects of the programs, their effect on integration, how they affect participating students’ civic values and practices, and the effects these programs have on the test scores of students remaining in public schools. Sixty-five of the 70 studies on the fiscal effects of these programs find a positive fiscal benefit from choice programs, with five finding a negative effect. Six of seven studies find choice programs are increasing school integration, with the other finding no statistical effect. Another six of eleven studies find choice programs are improving students’ civic values and practices, with five showing a null effect. Lastly, 25 of 27 studies find

the choice programs improve the test scores of students remaining in public schools, with one finding no effect, and one finding a negative effect.

Other studies also find students at private schools are less likely than their public school peers to experience problems such as alcohol abuse, bullying, drug use, fighting, gang activity, racial tension, theft, vandalism, and weapon-based threats. There is also a strong causal link suggesting private school choice programs improve the mental health of participating students.

It is probably for these reasons, and also because teacher unions have repeatedly played politics with school closings during the COVID-19 pandemic in direct conflict with students' best interests, that education choice is more popular with parents than ever before. Polling done by EdChoice released in December 2020 found 81 percent support for ESAs, for example, among the general public and 86 percent among current school parents, the highest level of support the program has received in the organization's eight years of polling on the issue. This represents a 4-percentage point increase over 2019. These findings are mirrored in the American Federation for Children's seventh-annual National School Choice Poll, released in January 2021, which saw 78 percent support for ESA programs.

The overwhelming empirical evidence presented in this report shows choice programs offer families improved access to high-quality schools that meet their children's unique needs and circumstances. Further, the programs produce benefits to society at large and help improve test scores for public school students. Therefore, legislators should create new education choice programs or expand existing ones so more students have the opportunity to enroll in these valuable programs.

The following documents provide more information about education choice.

### **The 123s of School Choice (2021 Edition)**

<https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021-123s-SlideShare-1.pdf>

This report from EdChoice is an in-depth review of the available research on private school choice programs in America. Areas of study include: private school choice program participant test scores, program participant attainment, parent satisfaction, public school students' test scores, civic values and practices, racial/ethnic integration and fiscal effects.

### **The Fiscal Effects of Private K–12 Education Choice Programs in the United States**

<https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Fiscal-Effects-of-Private-K-12-Education-Choice-Program-in-the-United-States-1.pdf>

From an analysis of 40 private educational choice programs in 19 states plus D.C., this EdChoice working paper summarizes the facts and evidence on the fiscal effects of educational choice programs across the United States. The programs in the analysis include three education savings accounts programs (ESAs), 19 school voucher programs, and 18 tax-credit scholarship programs.

### **A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice (Fourth Edition)**

<http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/A-Win-Win-Solution-The-Empirical-Evidence-on-School-Choice.pdf>

This paper by EdChoice details how a vast body of research shows educational choice programs

improve academic outcomes for students and schools, saves taxpayers money, reduces segregation in schools, and improves students' civic values. This edition brings together a total of 100 empirical studies examining these essential questions in one comprehensive report.

### **The Public Benefit of Private Schooling: Test Scores Rise When There Is More of It**

<https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa830.pdf>

This *Policy Analysis* from the Cato Institute examines the effect increased access to private schooling has had on international student test scores in 52 countries. The Cato researchers found that a 1 percentage point increase in the share of private school enrollment would lead to moderate increases in students' math, reading, and science achievement.

### **The Effects of School Choice on Mental Health**

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3272550](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3272550)

This study from Corey DeAngelis at the Cato Institute and Angela K. Dills of Western Carolina University empirically examines the relationship between school choice and mental health. It finds that states adopting broad-based voucher programs and charter schools witness declines in adolescent suicides and suggests that private schooling reduces the number of times individuals are seen for mental health issues.

### **Child Safety Accounts: Protecting Our Children through Parental Freedom**

<https://www.heartland.org/template-assets/documents/publications/CSAccountsPB.pdf>

In this *Heartland Policy Brief*, Vicki Alger, senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum and research fellow at the Independent Institute, and Heartland Policy Analyst Tim Benson detail the prevalence of bullying, harassment, and assault taking place in America's public schools and the difficulties for parents in having their child moved from a school that is unsafe for them. Alger and Benson propose a Child Safety Account program, which would allow parents to immediately have their child moved to a safe school – private, parochial, or public – as soon as parents feel the public school their child is currently attending is too dangerous to their child's physical or emotional health.