

LITTLE EVIDENCE AND BIG CONSEQUENCES: UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATION VOUCHER PROGRAMS

Even under the best of circumstances, policy conversations about private school vouchers are complicated. In many cases, they are also fraught with disagreements about impact, accountability, and constitutionality. Despite the controversy, some states have enacted voucher programs as a strategy for improving student achievement and expanding choice in education. The rationale behind the strategy is simple: by allowing parents to use the public dollars set aside for their children's public education to attend a private, and ostensibly better, school, the children will achieve at higher levels.

But as most policymakers know, few things in education are ever so simple. The issue becomes even murkier when the students using private school vouchers have disabilities. Within public schools, students with disabilities are protected under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). But in many states, once a student accepts a private school voucher, federally mandated protections, such as those required by IDEA, are no longer in place. The services and support guaranteed to that student by IDEA are now offered at the private school's discretion with little oversight or accountability (see Box A on the next page). For special education advocates and families of students with disabilities, this often-unknown consequence of accepting a private school voucher is a growing concern. Since most special education voucher programs—and private schools—are not required to meet the same rigorous accountability and transparency requirements of public schools, these vouchers raise additional concerns. As policymakers and education leaders consider using vouchers as a way to assist students with disabilities and their families, they will need research to better understand the impact of these policies.

SPECIAL EDUCATION VOUCHER PROGRAMS: BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

According to the Alliance for School Choice annual yearbook (Frendewey et al., 2015), the number of states that offer vouchers to special education students has doubled over the last seven to 10 years (see table 1 for a current list of special education voucher programs). The number of students using these vouchers is just over 43,000. State expenditures on special education vouchers have also increased dramatically, more than doubling in recent years to \$468 million. This substantial growth in special education voucher programs has occurred despite limited evidence of their efficacy and little or no accountability and oversight.

Although public education systems are becoming increasingly transparent and are subject to rigorous accountability measures, private schools are not subject to the same accountability standards. Also, private schools are generally not required by law to be transparent in their dealings with special education students and their families.

In addition, private schools do not have to abide by the rules and regulations associated with IDEA. State requirements for oversight and accountability of these voucher programs also vary considerably, so it can be difficult to get a comprehensive sense of how or whether special education students are actually benefiting from the programs.

BOX A — THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law passed in 1975 (and most recently amended in 2004) that ensures eligible children with disabilities have access to a free and high-quality education designed to meet their unique needs. Embedded within IDEA are several key requirements that states and districts must adhere to for students with disabilities enrolled in public schools:

- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to an education that is free, suited to the needs of the child, and provided by or paid for by a public school system.
- **Individualized Education Program:** Each child with a disability who is eligible for special education and related services under IDEA must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that describes his or her specific educational and service needs. The IEP is a written statement that is developed and revised by an IEP team consisting of the parents of a child with a disability, the regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a representative of the local educational agency, an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, and, whenever appropriate, the child with a disability.
- **Least Restrictive Environment:** To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, should be educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other approaches that involve removing children with disabilities from the regular educational environment should occur only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
- **Due Process:** Several procedures and protections are built into IDEA to ensure that public school parents of a child with an IEP can formally dispute decisions made about their child's education.

From a research perspective, the concept of vouchers has been a topic of education policy discussions for decades, but their actual use has been quite limited. Not surprisingly, the research and evidence base on overall voucher use is also fairly limited, and even more so for special education vouchers. Moreover, the political nature of the voucher debate makes it hard to objectively gauge the impact of private school vouchers on special needs students. This is because so much of the available research has

been conducted and/or financially supported by voucher advocates that may lack the credibility needed to ensure the research is truly nonbiased.

The idea of using vouchers in America's schools was heavily influenced by an essay written by economist Milton Friedman in 1955. Friedman believed that America's public school system was entrenched by bureaucracy and operated like an inefficient monopoly. He argued that a lack of competition provided few incentives for public school systems to produce the best possible educational results. In Friedman's view, giving students and their families the financial means to attend a public or private school of their choice was the best way to spur improvement and efficiency (Friedman, 1955). Not only would such a system improve educational quality by encouraging competition across schools to attract students, Friedman and his disciples argued, but it would also decrease educational costs, since voucher amounts are equal to or less than the traditional costs to educate students in the public school system (Winters, 2011). Moreover, an open choice marketplace would meet consumer demands more effectively by fostering a wide variety of schools with different pedagogies, curricula, and approaches to learning.

Friedman's view on vouchers had significant influence over education in some places (most notably Chile), but the use of vouchers in U.S. school systems gained only modest momentum in the 1970s and 1980s when private schools and school choice became the focus of many policy and research debates. Several voucher and tuition tax credit policies were proposed during this period but never gained any real traction (Powers & Potterton, 2017). Then in 1982 a study by Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore found that Catholic school students performed better academically than their public school peers and that racial and income achievement gaps were smaller in Catholic schools than in public schools. Despite having several methodological shortcomings,¹ this study garnered considerable attention, especially among religious leaders and conservative politicians. The fact that the report's lead author was James S. Coleman, author of *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (famously known as the "Coleman Report"), also added credence to the report's findings. Since 1982, various studies have tried to measure the impact of voucher programs in different states and districts. Although the evidence base remains questionable, vouchers remain a staple of the school choice agenda, and the development of special education voucher programs was tied to the larger movement (Hensel, 2010).

The first voucher program designed specifically for students with disabilities was Florida's McKay Scholarship Program in 1999. The program, which was part of a trio of reforms aimed at expanding school choice via vouchers under Governor Jeb Bush,² was spearheaded by then-Florida Senate President John M. McKay—a parent of a student with a disability. The McKay Program, currently the largest special education voucher program in the nation, became the model for similar programs in other states.

¹ See Powers & Potterton (2017) for a thorough discussion of the methodological issues related to Coleman et al.'s study.

² These reforms included Florida's Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), a voucher program that allowed state funds to be used to pay tuition at church-run schools. The OSP was ruled unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court in 2006 and no longer exists. The other reform, Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship Program, allows students to attend private schools with the help of publicly funded tax credits and still exists.

THE CURRENT VOUCHER LANDSCAPE

The current landscape of special education vouchers contains a wide range of programs and characteristics. Because each state has unique special education voucher legislation, program characteristics vary considerably. (See table 2 in the appendix for a comparison of voucher program characteristics). The discussion that follows identifies commonalities and differences across the various voucher programs and considers some of the pros and cons of different approaches.

Student Eligibility

All special education voucher programs are open to students with an IEP, a document required under IDEA that specifies the educational goals and specialized instructional and related services to be provided to a particular student with a disability attending a public school. However, several programs, such as Louisiana's School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities and Wisconsin's Special Needs Scholarship Program, include additional eligibility restrictions for vouchers. Louisiana's program requires students to reside in a parish with at least 190,000 residents, while Wisconsin's program reserves eligibility to students who have been rejected from participating in the state's Open Enrollment program.³ Several programs, such as Ohio's Autism Scholarship Program, limit vouchers to students with specific disabilities. Two states, Florida and Utah, expand eligibility beyond a student's IEP qualification. Whereas Florida's McKay Scholarship Program offers vouchers to students who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,⁴ Utah extends the definition of disability to include students with developmental delays.

Voucher Amount and Payment Methods

Special education voucher programs do not necessarily cover the full cost of education at a private school. Most programs provide payments equal to the amount of funding the state would have provided to the school district to educate that student if she or he had remained in the public system, as calculated by state funding formulas. Parents are expected to pay the difference if the tuition of the voucher-receiving private school is more than the voucher amount. Additionally, most programs do not cover critical costs to enable full access and participation, such as transportation. Not surprisingly, these additional costs have led critics of special education voucher programs to suggest that they may primarily benefit those who can afford to supplement the additional costs (Sailor & Stowe, 2003).

The payment process and the frequency of payments also vary from state to state (see table 3 in the appendix for a comparison). For the majority of special education voucher programs,⁵ the state

³ Wisconsin's Open Enrollment program allows children to attend a school district other than the one in which their family lives. However, the program enables public schools to reject the admission of students with disabilities by claiming that acceptance would cause an undue financial burden.

⁴ Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 classifies disabilities more broadly than IDEA. Whereas IDEA covers children within one or more of 13 specific disability categories, Section 504 covers any individual who has a physical or mental impairment. See Skalski and Standek (2010) for a review of the differences between Section 504 and IDEA.

⁵ North Carolina's special education voucher payment process is somewhat unique in that it is administered by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority and not the state department of education. Moreover, it is the only special education voucher program that gives parents the option to either apply for tuition reimbursement or have the North Carolina

department of education either directly sends checks to schools on behalf of families (LA, MS, WI) or provides checks directly to a parent or guardian, who must then endorse the check over to the private school via a restrictive endorsement (AK, FL, GA, OH, OK, and UT).⁶ Depending on the state, checks are distributed on a monthly basis (AK, MS), twice a year (NC), three times a year (OH), or four times a year (FL, GA, LA, OK, UT, WI) and are typically tied to a student's continual enrollment.

Regulations and Accountability Provisions

Although all special education voucher programs require schools receiving vouchers to adhere to certain rules and regulations, these rules vary widely by state. The majority of special education voucher programs have teacher qualification requirements for voucher-receiving private schools, and most programs require participating schools to go through a state approval process to ensure they are financially solvent. Every state also requires private schools to comply with state health and safety laws and federal laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, and national origin.

Contrary to common assumptions, however, most programs do not require voucher-receiving private schools to actually fulfill all the requirements of a student's public school IEP. Only two states—Ohio and Wisconsin—require private schools that accept special education vouchers to plan for or implement a student's IEP. And no state except Utah requires voucher-receiving schools to spell out for parents the specific services they will provide to students. Nor do most special education voucher programs require the administration of statewide standardized tests to evaluate student progress. This lack of accountability and oversight is a common criticism of special education voucher programs. Critics contend that the lack of transparency and an objective measure to assess a student's progress leaves parents unsure whether a school is adequately meeting their child's needs (Almazan & Marshall, 2016).

Supporters of special education vouchers counter these criticisms by asserting that parents are in a better position than any governing body to determine whether a voucher-receiving private school is sufficiently meeting their child's needs (Usman, 2014; Bon, Decker, & Strassfeld, 2016). However, opponents have expressed concern that voucher-receiving private schools, without any obligation to demonstrate effectiveness, can easily mislead parents into believing that their school is appropriate for a child when in fact the school cannot meet the student's needs (Usman, 2014; Almazan & Marshall, 2016). This is exactly what happened in the early years of Florida's McKay Scholarship Program, when a number of voucher-receiving private schools were found to have employed staff with criminal backgrounds or failed to deliver promised educational services to students (Hensel, 2010). The lack of accountability and oversight also led to the proliferation of sham schools, some of which did not even have a physical location, that were set up simply to reap the benefits of voucher dollars (Garcia-Roberts, 2011). In 2006, the Florida legislature responded by passing additional accountability and oversight legislation to curb this kind of predatory behavior. Yet, evidence suggests that the behavior persisted (Garcia-Roberts, 2011).

State Education Assistance Authority issue checks to voucher-receiving private schools made payable to a parent or guardian, who must then endorse the check over to the private school.

⁶ A restrictive endorsement limits the use of a check to whatever purpose is stated in the endorsement.

Critics are perhaps most concerned that many parents are unaware that when they use special education vouchers to send their child to a private school, they are waiving some or all of the legal protections their child had in public school (Hensel, 2010; Hensel, 2015; Underwood, 2015; Bon et al., 2016). In most states, parents are unable to compel voucher-receiving private schools to adhere to federal protections granted to them under IDEA, such as implementing their child's IEP or providing a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for the duration of the child's enrollment at the private school. Similarly, while both the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 prohibit public and private schools from discriminating against students with disabilities, they afford minimal legal protections for students with disabilities who use a voucher to attend a private school (Bon et al., 2016).

For many critics, these concerns focus squarely on transparency. Although some special education voucher programs explicitly state that the district no longer has an obligation to adhere to IDEA provisions for children who use vouchers, others remain silent on the issue (Goldstein, 2017). A recent study by Bon et al. (2016) asserts that "it remains unclear whether parents are fully aware that they are relinquishing their children's rights to procedural and substantive guarantees of IDEA, and perhaps Title II of the American Disabilities Act" (p. 508). Voucher parents also appear to have little recourse for ensuring the quality of services provided to their child in school. It appears that not a single special education voucher program has a formal complaint process for parents to challenge the quality of the education that their child is receiving at a private voucher school.

Voucher proponents may contend this issue is moot because the families that use special education vouchers do so because they are dissatisfied with the protections and services given to their child in public school (Usman, 2014; Buck, 2012). They argue that parents would not seek to leave the public system if the protections under IDEA sufficiently addressed their child's needs. Supporters also point out that participation in special education voucher programs is completely optional, and if families become truly concerned about IDEA protections and services for their children, they can simply elect to re-enroll in public schools, where the IDEA protections would once again be in place (Buck & Greene, 2010; Usman, 2014; Winters, 2011).

Wealthy and Non-minority Students

All state special education vouchers are open to students from all income levels. However, in practice, voucher recipients may be of higher income due to the additional costs of a private school education that are not covered by the voucher (Usman, 2014; Hensel, 2010). Detractors argue that students from lower-income families, who are disproportionately from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, are generally unable to afford the true (and hidden) costs of enrolling students in voucher-receiving private schools. A 2008 analysis of Ohio's Autism Scholarship Program found that families from relatively affluent Ohio communities used vouchers more often than families from poorer communities (Van Lier, 2008).

Contradictory evidence comes from Greene and Forester's 2003 study of Florida's McKay Scholarship Program, which indicated that the percentage of minority children participating in the voucher program was approximately equal to the racial composition of students with disabilities in Florida's

public system. The authors also suggest that the extra cost of tuition beyond the voucher amount was not a significant impediment to use a voucher for private school.

Children with Mild Disabilities and Increased Segregation

Most state special education voucher programs are open to students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of a child's disability. Yet, another key issue is whether voucher-receiving private schools favor students with mild disabilities and avoid enrolling those with the most severe disabilities (Usman, 2014; Hansel, 2010). Greene and Forster (2003) find that students with the most severe disabilities were not underrepresented in Florida's McKay program, but their finding is both dated and limited to a single special education voucher program.

The Voucher Effect on Public Resources

The possibility that students with mild disabilities disproportionately use special education vouchers raises concerns that such programs lead to diminished public resources for children with disabilities who remain in the public school. (Usman, 2014; Hansel, 2010). Usman (2014) indicates that "although the public money that is lost when a child leaves to use a voucher at a private school should only account for the expenditure that would have otherwise gone to educate the child who left, critics contend that this does not take into account fixed costs" (p. 82). The fixed costs, which may entail the training and salary expenses for instructional staff, speech-language pathologists, or occupational therapists, exist regardless of the number of students with disabilities served in the public system.

Special education voucher advocates maintain that the diminishment of funds associated with students exiting the public system does not necessarily lead to diminished services. Evidence from Florida's McKay Scholarship Program suggests that there was a positive and statistically significant test score improvement in both math and reading for special needs students with relatively mild disabilities who remained in public schools (Winters & Greene, 2008). Moreover, the authors concluded that the voucher program had neither a beneficial nor detrimental effect on children with the most severe special needs who remained in the public schools.

RESEARCH

While much has been written about vouchers generally, only a few academic studies have empirically investigated special education vouchers, and all of them have been focused on just one program, Florida's McKay Scholarship Program. It is important to stress again that these studies, like much of the research done on vouchers in general, do not come from traditionally neutral sources. All three studies appeared in partisan publications and/or have taken an ideological stance either in favor for or against special education vouchers.

In 2003, a study supported and published by the pro-voucher Manhattan Institute found that parents currently participating in the program, as well as parents who had left the program, were more satisfied

with their experiences in private McKay schools than they had been in the public system (Greene & Forester, 2003). The parents of current participants reported that their child's class size dropped by nearly half compared with that of the public school previously attended, and these parents indicated that their children were victimized far less because of their disability. The study also noted that even though the McKay program allowed participants to choose schools that charged tuition above the amount of the voucher, roughly 72% of current participants and 76% of former participants reported paying either nothing or less than \$1,000 per year above the voucher. Greene and Foster attributed this finding to the fact that students with more serious disabilities received a larger McKay voucher amount.

In 2006, a study by Weidner and Herrington (2006) investigated the types and sources of information parents gathered before participating in the McKay scholarship program and examined how this information influenced school selection. The study found that most parents sought information on class size, academic quality, teacher quality, and curriculum, and that parents with higher levels of education and income were more engaged in the process. Further, the study found that although racial and ethnic status did not influence information gathering, it was a factor in school selection. The study also reported that the parents of voucher students were more satisfied with their child's school than were public school parents.⁷

The only other scholarly research on special education voucher programs was conducted by Greene and Winters in 2008 and 2011. Their 2008 study evaluated the effect of the McKay Scholarship Program on students who remained in the public system. The study, which was also supported and published by the Manhattan Institute, utilized a fixed effects regression model⁸ and relied on student-level data on the universe of public school students in the state of Florida from 2000-01 through 2004-05. The authors found that as more private schools began participating in the McKay program, students with relatively mild disabilities who stayed in public schools made greater improvement in test scores. For students diagnosed with relatively severe disabilities, academic proficiency was neither helped nor harmed by increased exposure to the McKay program. Using the same data, in 2011 Greene and Winter followed up their 2008 study by examining whether the academic achievement of students without disabilities benefited when their public schools faced competition from private McKay schools and the extent to which special education vouchers reduced the likelihood that public schools newly identified students with a specific learning disability diagnosis (SLD).⁹ The authors found that as the number of voucher-receiving private schools surrounding a public school increased, test scores for students without disabilities increased, and public school students in grades 4 through 6 were 12% less likely to be diagnosed as having a SLD (Winters, 2011; Greene & Winters, 2011).

⁷ The study compared a random sample of parents who were either using the McKay voucher or had filed a notice of intent with a random sample of parents who enrolled their children with disabilities in the public system.

⁸ A fixed effects regression model mitigates several sample selection issues by controlling for some unobserved individual characteristics of students.

⁹ SLD is one of 13 specific disability categories covered by IDEA. The SLD category includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, developmental aphasia, and dyslexia.

CONCLUSION

As the number of special education voucher programs increases across states, it is important for policymakers, education leaders, parents, and other stakeholders to recognize how little we actually know about the impact of these programs. Because these programs operate outside of public school accountability and oversight systems, it can be challenging for anyone to understand all the aspects and ramifications of this emerging policy option. The fact that only a very limited amount of research has been done on the impact and effectiveness of special education vouchers compounds the need for additional scrutiny and deliberation.

In the absence of any significant federal or state oversight, it will be incumbent on researchers and other experts to investigate both the potential benefits and negative consequences of special education voucher programs. To guide this effort, CEP recommends that additional research be conducted to address the following high priority questions and concerns:

- Is there sufficient oversight of state special education vouchers to ensure that voucher recipients are receiving a quality education?
- Are parents adequately informed of the due process and other rights and protections they may lose for their child with a disability when accepting the state special education voucher?
- Are state special education voucher recipients reflective of the demographics of the state's public school students with disabilities in terms of race?
- Do special education voucher programs disproportionately attract and favor middle- and high-income families because of the additional and sometimes hidden costs involved in participating in most programs?
- Do the private schools receiving special education vouchers favor students with mild disabilities and avoid enrolling those with the most severe disabilities?
- Are special education voucher students attending classes with their non-disabled peers?
- How do outcomes of special education voucher students compare with their public-school counterparts?
- What is the financial impact of special education vouchers on local public schools?

The relative newness of special education voucher programs, coupled with a modest research base (which is dated, limited to a single program, and often funded by pro-voucher organizations), supports the need for more non-partisan, non-biased evidence on these and other concerns. Unfortunately, answering these complex questions will not be easy or quick so it is incumbent on state and local leaders to be honest and frank with their constituents about what is known and not known about these

programs. Since states with programs already in place are in an excellent position to address these and other questions, CEP strongly encourages state education leaders to pursue and support rigorous, independent research of their voucher programs. CEP also encourages the families of students with disabilities and special education advocacy groups to press both state and local leaders for honest answers about issues that may affect their children if they participate in their state's special education voucher program.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. List of Special Education Voucher Programs as of 2015-16 School Year

State	Program	Year Enacted	Students Enrolled in 2015–16	Funds Expended in 2015–16	Number of Participating Schools
Arkansas	Succeed Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities	2015	N/A	N/A	27 (2016-17)
Florida	John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program	1999	30,116	\$357,000,000	1,369 (2016-17)
Georgia	Special Needs Scholarship Program	2007	3,400	\$13,649,039	235 (2016-17)
Louisiana	School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities	2010	342	\$774,275	27 (2016-17)
Mississippi	Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia Program	2012	149	\$732,783	4 (2016-17)
	Speech-Language Therapy Scholarship for Students with Speech-Language Impairments Program	2013	1	N/A	1 (2016-17)
North Carolina	Children with Disabilities Scholarship Grant	2013	820	\$4,428,000	248
Ohio	Autism Scholarship Program	2003	3,135	\$54,621,023	272 (2014–15)
	Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program	2011	4,159	\$29,886,728	263 (2014–15)
Oklahoma	Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program	2010	469	\$3,600,000	49 (2016–17)
Utah	Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship	2005	700	\$3,739,717	42
Wisconsin	Special Needs Scholarship Program	2015	N/A	N/A	28 (2016-17)

Table 2. Comparison of Voucher Program Characteristics

State	Program	Must have IEP	Permits Section 504	Limited to specific disabilities	Testing mandate	State approval	Report progress to parents	Fiscal soundness	Specify services or instruction	In business prior to voucher application	Teachers must have bachelor's degree or multiple years' experience	Background checks
AR	Succeed Scholarship	Yes	No	No	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
FL	John M. McKay Scholarship	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
GA	Special Needs Scholarship	Yes	No	No	No**	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
LA	School Choice for Students with Exceptionalities	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
MS	Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Speech-Language Therapy Scholarship	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
NC	Children with Disabilities Scholarship	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
OH	Autism Scholarship	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
OK	Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
UT	Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
WI	Special Needs Scholarship	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

*Schools must "administer annually a nationally recognized norm-referenced test as established by the State Board of Education"

**Parents request may request that the student participate in statewide assessments

Table 3. Comparison of Payment Process and Frequency

State	Program	Payment Process	Payment Frequency	Governing Statute
AK	Succeed Scholarship	Scholarship payments disbursed to the parent or legal guardian by the Department or another state agency, person, firm, or corporation designated by the Department to administer and disburse funds. If the Department designates a third party to administer funds, scholarship payments shall be by individual warrant made payable to the student’s parent or legal guardian and delivered by the Department to the third party, and the parent or legal guardian shall restrictively endorse the warrant to the private school of the parent’s or legal guardian’s choice after which the third party shall deposit the payment into the account of the private school.	Monthly	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-41-801 – 807
FL	John M. McKay Scholarship	Check is issued by DOE, made out to a parent or guardian, but is sent directly to schools. Schools must notify the parent of guardian of students when checks are received and have them endorse the check over to a private school using a restrictive endorsement.	Quarterly	Fla. Stat. §§ 1002.39; 1002.421
GA	Special Needs Scholarship	Check is issued by DOE, made out to a parent or guardian, but is sent directly to schools. Schools must notify the parent of guardian of students when checks are received and have them endorse the check over to a private school using a restrictive endorsement.	Quarterly	O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-2110 – 20-2-2118
LA	School Choice for Students w/ Exceptionalities	DOE sends check to school on behalf of the family.	Quarterly	La. Rev. Stat. § 17:4031
MS	Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship	DOE sends check to school on behalf of the family.	Monthly	Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-173-1 – 31
	Speech Language Therapy Scholarship	DOE sends check to school on behalf of the family.	Monthly	Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-175-1 – 29
NC	Children with Disabilities Scholarship	Administered by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority. The Authority shall disburse scholarship funds awarded to eligible students for tuition at a nonpublic school based upon the method selected by the nonpublic school. A nonpublic school may elect to participate in the scholarship endorsement for tuition option or the reimbursement for tuition option. Scholarship funds for tuition shall be disbursed as follows: Scholarship endorsement for tuition: The Authority shall remit, scholarship funds awarded to eligible students for endorsement by at least one of the student's parents or guardians for tuition to attend a nonpublic school. The parent or guardian shall restrictively endorse the scholarship funds awarded to the eligible student to the school for deposit into the account of the school. Reimbursement for tuition: The parent or guardian shall pay tuition directly to the school. The Authority shall reimburse the parent or guardian no sooner than the midpoint of each semester. A parent or guardian may receive reimbursement for tuition if the parent or guardian provides documentation that the student is enrolled in a school.	Twice a Year	N.C. Rev. Stat. §§ 115C-112.5–9
OH	Autism Scholarship Program	Check is issued by DOE, made out to both the school and the parent or guardian. By law, the parent or guardian must endorse each check before the school can cash or deposit the payment.	3 Times a Year	Ohio Rev. Code §§ 3310.41 – 43
	Jon Peterson Sp. Needs Scholarship	Check is issued by DOE, made out to both the school and the parent or guardian. By law, the parent or guardian must endorse each check before the school can cash or deposit the payment.	3 Times a Year	Ohio Rev. Code §§ 3310.51 – 64
OK	Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship	Check is issued by DOE, made out to a parent or guardian, but is sent directly to schools. Schools must notify parent or guardian of students when checks are received and have them endorse the check over to a private school using a restrictive endorsement.	Quarterly	Okla. Stat. §§ 70-13-101.1 and 101.2
UT	Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship	Check is issued by DOE, made out to a parent or guardian, but is sent directly to schools. Schools must notify parent or guardian of students when checks are received and have them endorse the check over to a private school using a restrictive endorsement.	Quarterly	Utah Code 53A-1a-701 – 710
WI	Special Needs Scholarship	DOE sends check to school on behalf of the family.	Quarterly	Wis. Stat. §115.7915

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Center on Education Policy
Graduate School of Education & Human Development
The George Washington University
2100 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 310
Ph: 202-994-9050 Fax: 202-994-8859
E-mail: cep-dc@cep-dc.org Web: www.cep-dc.org