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“The Effects of School Vouchers on College Enrollment: Experimental Evidence from New York City”

What is the study about?

The study examines the effects of private school vouchers on college enrollment outcomes. The vouchers were given to low-income elementary-age students through the New York School Choice Scholarships Foundation (SCSF) program. In 1997, the SCSF used a random assignment lottery to offer three-year vouchers to approximately 1,000 low-income families with children entering grades 1 through 5. The vouchers could be used to reduce the cost of attending any private school in New York City. The maximum value of the vouchers was \$1,400 per year, which represented most of the typical tuition cost of attending a Catholic school in New York City. More than three quarters of the children who received vouchers ultimately made use of the scholarship at some point during the three-year period.

The sample used in this analysis was 2,642 New York City public school students (1,363 students who were offered vouchers, and 1,279 students who served as a comparison group) in grades 1–5 in 1997. Of the participants, 42% were African-American and 46% were Hispanic.

The New Quick Review

In March 2012, the WWC began using a new format for quick reviews to allow for a faster release. When a more complete review is conducted for the study described here, this information will be updated.

Handy Definitions

- ▼ *quick review*
- ▼ *study rating*
- ▼ *meets evidence standards*
- ▼ *meets evidence standards with reservations*
- ▼ *does not meet evidence standards*

See the *full glossary* ▶

What did the study report?

The study found no differences of the offer of a school voucher on college enrollment; however, there was a positive impact of vouchers on college enrollment (part-time and full-time) for African-American students. In addition, the study reported that African-American students who were offered a school voucher had statistically significantly higher rates of attending a private 4-year university or a selective 4-year university. The study also found no statistically

significant effects of school vouchers on any of the outcomes assessed for the subgroup of Hispanic students.

How does the WWC rate this study

This study *meets WWC evidence standards* because it is a randomized controlled trial with low attrition for all outcomes, for both the full sample and for the two subgroups reported (African-American and Hispanic students). A more thorough review (forthcoming) will confirm the analyses of the enrollment outcomes and provide additional detail on this study.

Citation

Chingos, M., & Peterson, P. (2012). *The effects of school vouchers on college enrollment: Experimental evidence from New York City*. Retrieved from http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Impacts_of_School_Vouchers_FINAL.pdf.

Absence of conflict of interest

The original evaluation of the New York School Choice Scholarships Foundation was conducted by staff from Mathematica Policy Research, and the current study utilizes a subset of the data from this original evaluation. Because Mathematica operates the WWC, this study was reviewed by staff from subcontractor organizations.