

Summary of Research Findings Regarding the Effects of Private School Choice Programs

Dr. Patrick J. Wolf

Distinguished Professor in the University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform

November 14, 2023

Achievement Effects on Participating Students

- A meta-analysis of 21 “gold standard” experimental studies from around the world (18 from the U.S.) finds that students in choice programs drop slightly in achievement initially, as they adjust to their new school, then surge ahead of their control group peers by the second year in reading and the third year in math, demonstrating large gains by the fourth year and beyond (Figure 1)

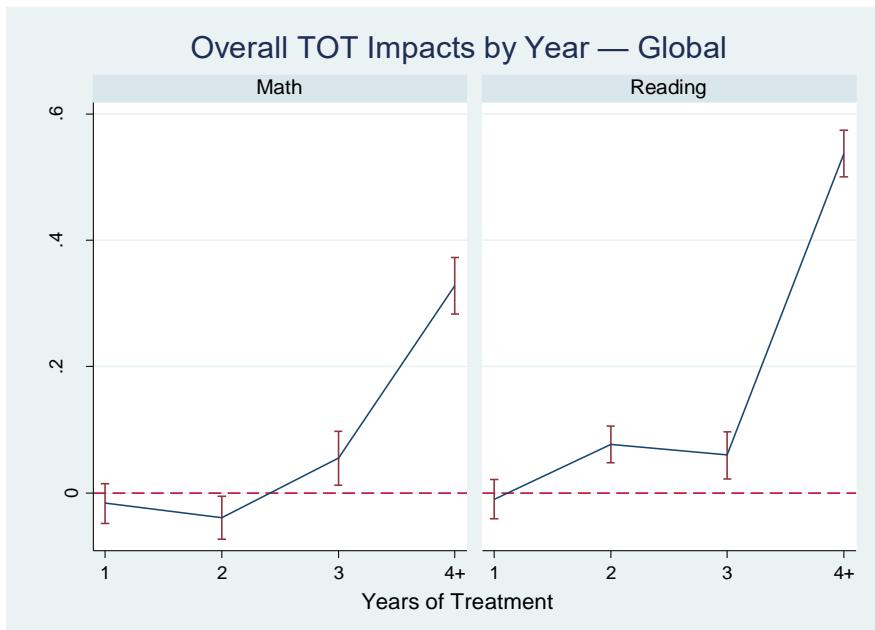


Figure 1. Average effect of participating in a private school choice program on student achievement in math and reading by years in the program (Shakeel, Anderson & Wolf 2021)

Attainment Effects on Participating Students

- 4 of 5 findings on the effects of choice programs on high school graduation are positive (Cowen et al. 2013; Erickson & Scafidi 2020; Warren 2011; Wolf et al. 2013), while the remaining finding is of no effect (Austin & Pardo 2021)
- 7 of 8 findings on the effects of choice programs on college enrollment are positive overall (Austin & Pardo 2021; Chingos, Monarrez & Kuehn 2019; Erickson & Scafidi 2020; Wolf, Witte & Kisida 2019) or at least for disadvantaged subgroups (Chingos & Peterson 2015; 2021; Erickson, Mills & Wolf 2021), while the remaining finding is of no effect (Chingos 2018)
- All 4 findings on the effects of choice programs on college completion are positive overall (Chingos, Monarrez & Kuehn 2019) or at least for disadvantaged subgroups (Cheng & Peterson 2021; Chingos & Peterson 2015; Wolf, Witte & Kisida 2019)

Civic Effects on Participating Students

- Of 86 findings on the effects of private schooling or private school choice on political tolerance, political participation, political knowledge, and community engagement, 50 are positive, 33 are neutral and only 3 are negative (Figure 2)

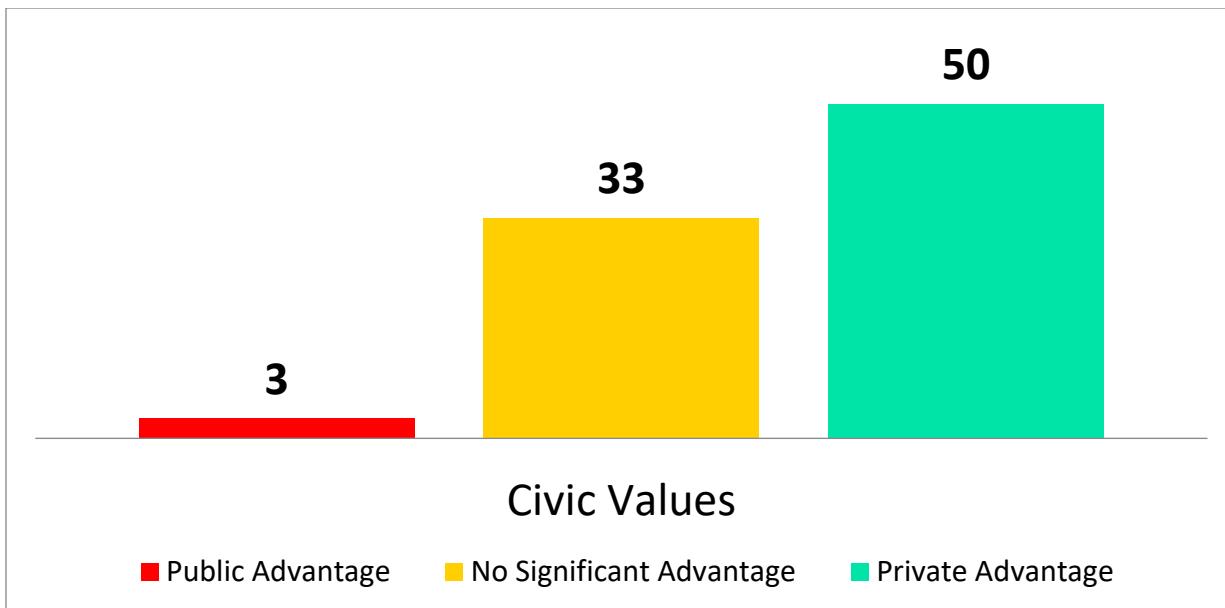


Figure 2. Findings regarding the effects of private schooling on civic outcomes (Wolf 2020)

Crime & Mental Health Effects on Participating Students

- States experience declines in adolescent suicides after adopting expansive school choice programs and adults report fewer visits to counselors or therapists if they attended private schools in their youth (DeAngelis & Dills 2018)
- Participants in the Milwaukee school voucher program 2006-2012, when tracked at age 22-25, had committed 86% fewer property crimes, 53% fewer drug crimes, and were involved in 38% fewer paternity suits than carefully matched students who had attended Milwaukee Public Schools (Figure 3)

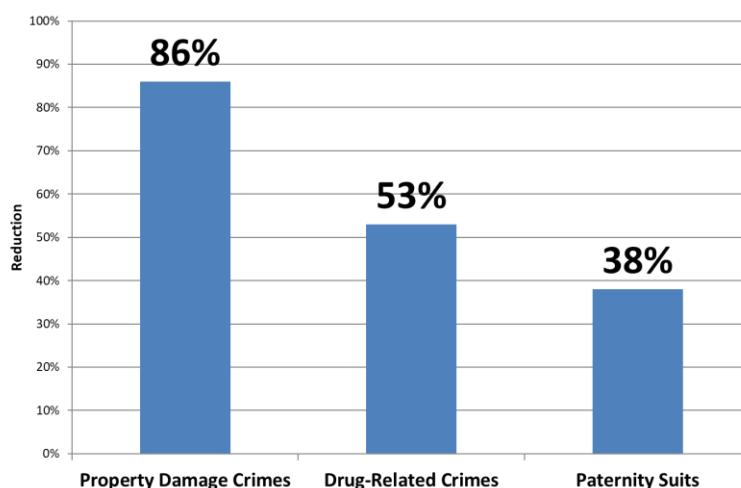


Figure 3. Reductions in crime or judicial proceedings due to participation in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (DeAngelis & Wolf 2020)

Achievement Effects on Non-participating Students

- 26 of 29 statistical studies of the effect of competition from choice programs on the achievement of affected public school students report positive results, with one study finding only neutral results and two reporting a mix of neutral and negative effects
- A meta-analysis of all the studies concludes: “Overall, we found small positive effects of competition on student achievement [in public schools].” (Jabbar et al. 2019)