Summary of
The U.S. Department of Education’s Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After One Year (April 2017)

DC Vouchers Negatively Affect Student Academic Achievement

- Students in the voucher program performed worse in math than students who were not offered a voucher.
- Students in grades K-5 who participated in the voucher program performed worse in both math and reading than students who were not offered a voucher.
- Students previously attending non-failing public schools who participated in the voucher program performed worse in both math and reading than students who were not offered a voucher.

Examining Sub-Sections of Students Further Reveals the Program’s Negative Impacts

- There was a statistically significant negative impact on math achievement for:
  - Students overall who used a voucher (7.3% points)
  - Students in grades K-5 who used a voucher (14.7% points)
  - Students who did not attend a schools in need of improvement (non-SINI school) at the time of applying to the voucher program and used a voucher (18.3% points)
  - Students who had lower achievement scores in reading at the time of applying to the voucher program and used a voucher (9.8% points)
- There was a statistically significant negative impact on reading achievement for:
  - Students in grades K-5 who used a voucher (9.3% points)
  - Students who did not attend a school in need of improvement (non-SINI school) at the time of applying to the voucher program and used a voucher (14.6% points)
- There was a negative – even if not a statistically significant negative – impact for every demographic of student studied, with the exception of students in grades 6-12. However, none of the positive impacts for students in grades 6-12 were statistically significant.
- Elementary students in grades K-5 were the largest group measured by the study (68% of participants), and they had statistically significant negative scores in both reading and math.
DC Vouchers Do Not Provide Greater School Satisfaction or More Parental Involvement

- The program had no statistically significant impact on parents’ or students’ general satisfaction with the school the child attended in that first year.
- The program had no statistically significant impact on students’ perceptions of safety at their school in that first year.
- The program had no statistically significant impact on the involvement of parents in the education of their child who was offered or used a voucher in that first year.

Negative Student Achievement Results May Be Due to Less Instruction Time Provided to Students in DC Voucher Schools

- The researchers determined that the study results cannot be dismissed with claims that the students not in the voucher program (the control group, which included students who were not offered a voucher) attended higher-performing DC public schools that the students in the program (the treatment group, which included students who were offered or used a voucher): Evidence showed that “the study’s control group students were attending average DC schools.”
- The study also determined that the study results cannot be dismissed with claims that the students in the program performed worse because they were adjusting to a new school: “There was no statistically significant association between changing schools and student achievement in reading and mathematics.”
- The study did find that students who were not in the voucher program group received more instruction time in both reading and math than students who were in the program.
  - Students not in the program in grades K-5 received 65.5 minutes more per week in reading and 48.3 minutes more per week in math.
  - The differences were smaller for students in the program in grades 6-12: 26.9 minutes more per week in reading and 48.9 minutes more per week in math.

DC Vouchers Are Not Popular

- Thirty percent of students offered a voucher failed to use them.