Summary of
The U.S. Department of Education’s Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Three Years After Students Applied (May 2019)

DC Vouchers Had No Impact on Student Academic Achievement

- There were no statistically significant impacts on either reading or mathematics achievement for students who received vouchers or used vouchers three years after applying to the program.

- The lack of impact on student academic achievement applied to each of the study's eight subgroups of students: (1) students attending schools in need of improvement when they applied, (2) students not attending schools in need of improvement when they applied, (3) students entering elementary grades when they applied, (4) students entering secondary grades when they applied, (5) students scoring above the median in reading at the time of application, (6) students below the median in reading at the time of application, (7) students scoring above the median in mathematics at the time of application, and (8) students below the median in mathematics at the time of application.

DC Vouchers Do Not Provide Greater Parental Satisfaction

- The program had no statistically significant impact on parents’ satisfaction with the school their child attended after three years.

- The program had a statistically significant impact on students’ satisfaction with their school only for one subgroup of students (those with reading scores above the median), and no statistically significant impact for any other subgroup.

DC Vouchers Do Not Provide a Greater Sense of School Safety for Parents

- The program had no statistically significant impact on parents’ perceptions of safety for the school their child attended after three years.

DC Vouchers Do Not Increase Parental Involvement

- The program had no statistically significant impact on parents’ involvement with their child’s education at school or at home after three years.

DC Vouchers Do Not Provide More Classroom Instruction Time or School-Wide Resources

- The study found that students who received a voucher on average were provided 1.7 hours less of instruction time a week in both reading and math than students who did not receive vouchers.
The study found that students who received a voucher had less access to programming for students with learning disabilities and for students who are English Language Learners than students who did not receive vouchers.

The study also found that students who received vouchers had fewer school safety measures in place at their schools than students who did not receive vouchers.

DC Voucher Schools Are Predominantly Religious and the Vast Majority Charge Tuition Above the Voucher Amount

- The study found that 62% of the schools participating in the voucher program from 2013-2016, were religiously affiliated.

- The study found that 70% of the schools participating in the voucher program from 2013-2016 had published tuition rates above the maximum amount of the voucher. Among those schools, the average difference between the maximum voucher amount and the tuition was $13,310.

Many Students Reject the Voucher or Leave the Program

- The study found that three years after applying to the voucher program, less than half (49%) of the students who received vouchers used them to attend a private school for the full three years.

- The study also found that 20% of students stopped using the voucher after one year and returned to public school, and 22% of students who received vouchers did not use them at all.