

The Academic & Civic Effects of School Choice

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School Choice in America

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A Little About Me



- ✓ Born in Washington, DC, raised in St. Cloud, MN, 15 years a proud Arkansan
- ✓ My 32nd year studying school choice – Distinguished Professor of Education Policy & Endowed Chair in School Choice
- ✓ “Wolf is a well-known advocate of school choice. He bases his advocacy on the research.” (AERA Newsletter)

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed here are my own and do not represent the official positions of the University of Arkansas or U of A System.



Quality of Statistical Evaluations of School Choice

How do we deal with “selection bias”?

Methods:



Random assignment experiments



Matching longitudinal studies



Control variables



Uncontrolled descriptive comparisons

Guide to the Review

- Only Bronze standard studies or better
- Look for the medal!
- Any private school choice program
- Positive choice findings overall = **Green**
- Positive for subgroups = **Light Green**
- Null = **Yellow**
- Negative = **Red**

Five Ways to Slice this Pie



Participant Achievement Effects



What Do We Hear About the Achievement Effects of Choice?

“...there is no evidence that students in voucher schools get higher test scores.” (Diane Ravitch, May 3, 2016)

“...seven of the nine studies [since 2015] found that voucher students saw relative learning losses.”

(Christopher Lubienski & Joel Malin, August 30, 2019)

Benefit	Study	City	Finding – Private School Choice
All Students (7)	Cowen (2008)	Charlotte	+8 pts in reading, +7 pts in math
	Greene (2001)	Charlotte	+ 6 pts on combined reading and math test
	Greene et al (1999)	Milwaukee	+6 pts in reading, +11 pts in math
	Rouse (1998)	Milwaukee	+8 pts in math, no difference in reading
	Howell et al (2002)	DC	+3 pts combined reading & math
	Wolf et al (2013)	DC	+4.8 pts in reading
	Anderson & Wolf (2017)	DC	+8.7 pts in reading
Some Students (4)	Barnard et al (2003)	New York	+5 pts in math for students leaving low-performing schools
	Jin et al (2010)	New York	+4 pts in math for students leaving low-performing schools
	Howell et al (2002)	New York	+4 pts for African-American students on combined reading/math test
	Howell et al (2002)	Dayton	+6.5 pts for African-American students on combined reading/math test
No Effects (4)	Webber et al. (2019)	DC	No difference in math or reading
	Krueger & Zhu (2004)	New York	No difference in math or reading
	Bitler et al (2013)	New York	No difference in math or reading by quartile
	Bettinger & Slonim (2006)	Toledo	No difference in math or reading
Negative (2)	Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2016)	Louisiana	-0.4 standard deviation 1-year effect on math
	Mills & Wolf (2019)	Louisiana	4-year effects on math, reading & science of -.21 to -.39 SD

Key Questions

How can so many commentators mischaracterize the findings?

1. Include non-experimental and irrelevant studies
2. Cherry pick findings based on subject and year

What is distinctive about the Louisiana Scholarship Program?

1. Most highly regulated school voucher program
2. Only 1/3 of private schools participate
3. Schools required to administer the state test


















Educational Attainment



What Do People Say About Attainment & Choice?

“The findings for both achievement and attainment are mixed, with no clear patterns.”

(Lubienski & Brewer, NEPC, 2018)

Attainment Study	Place	Effect
 Wolf et al (2013)	DC	+21 percentage points - Diploma
 Erickson & Scafidi (2020)	Georgia	+17 percentage points - Diploma
 Cowen et al. (2013)	Milwaukee	+4-6 percentage points - Diploma
 Warren (2011)	Milwaukee	+12 percentage points - Diploma
 Austin & Pardo (2021)	Indiana	No difference – Diploma
 Austin & Pardo (2021)	Indiana	+8 percentage points – College Enrollment
 Chingos, Monarrez & Kuehn (2019)	Florida	+6 percentage points – College Enrollment
 Erickson & Scafidi (2020)	Georgia	+19 percentage points – College Enrollment
 Wolf, Witte & Kisida (2019)	Milwaukee	+4-6 percentage points – College Enrollment
 Chingos & Peterson (2015)	New York City	+5-6 percentage points for Blacks – College Enrollment
 Cheng & Peterson (2021)	New York City	+8 percentage points for mod-dis. – College Enrollment
 Erickson, Mills & Wolf (forthcoming)	Louisiana	+8 percentage points for H.S. aps – College Enrollment
 Chingos (2018)	DC	No difference – College Enrollment
 Chingos, Monarrez & Kuehn (2019)	Florida	+1-2 percentage points – Bachelor’s Degree
 Wolf, Witte & Kisida (2019)	Milwaukee	+3 percentage points for elem. aps – Bachelor’s Degree
 Cheng & Peterson (2021)	New York City	+5-7 percentage points for mod-dis. – Bachelor’s Deg.
 Chingos & Peterson (2015)	New York City	+2-3 percentage points for Blacks – Bachelor’s Degree

Why Might Choice Affect Attainment More Than Test Scores?

- Parents care more about attainment
- Private schools educate the whole child
- Attainment is more malleable
- No evidence that private schools have lower standards for graduation

Competitive Effects: All Silver Standard



What Do People Say About Choice's Effect on Public Schools?

“Do charter schools, school vouchers and online schools really hurt our neighborhood public schools? You bet they do.”

(Network for Public Education, 2017)

“Is it not possible that giving poor kids a way out will force the public schools to improve?”

(Senator Joe Biden, September 30, 1997)

Greene (2001)	Florida	Positive
Greene & Winters (2004)	Florida	Positive
West & Peterson (2005)	Florida	Positive
Figlio & Rouse (2006)	Florida	Positive
Rouse et al (2007)	Florida	Positive
Winters & Greene (2011)	Florida	Positive
Figlio & Hart (2011)	Florida	Positive
Chakrabarti (2013)	Florida	Positive
Figlio, Hart & Karbownik (2021)	Florida	Positive
Hammons (2002)	Maine	Positive
Hammons (2002)	Vermont	Positive
Egalite (2014)	Indiana	Positive
Forster (2008)	Indiana	Positive
Forster (2008)	Ohio	Positive
Carr (2011)	Ohio	Positive
Figlio (2016)	Ohio	Positive
Hoxby (2011)	Milwaukee	Positive
Greene & Forster (2002)	Milwaukee	Positive
Carnoy et al (2007)	Milwaukee	Positive
Chakrabarti (2008)	Milwaukee	Positive
Green & Marsh (2009)	Milwaukee	Positive
Egalite (2014)	Louisiana	Positive
Greene & Forster (2002)	San Antonio	Positive
Gray, Merrifield, & Adzima (2014)	San Antonio	Positive
Jacob & Dougherty (2014)	Indiana	Positive
Mader (2010)	Milwaukee	Positive
Greene & Winters (2006)	Washington D.C.	None
Bowen & Trivitt (2014)	Florida	Negative

Civic Values



School Choice Rally

Statehouse

abc COLUMBIA

Civic Outcomes

- **Political Tolerance** – willingness to extend constitutional rights to disliked groups
- **Political Participation** – involvement in civic activities
- **Civic Knowledge and Skills** – familiarity with the workings of government & the ability to communicate with officials
- **Voluntarism and Social Capital** – unpaid involvement in improving one's community

What Do People Say About Civic Values & School Choice?

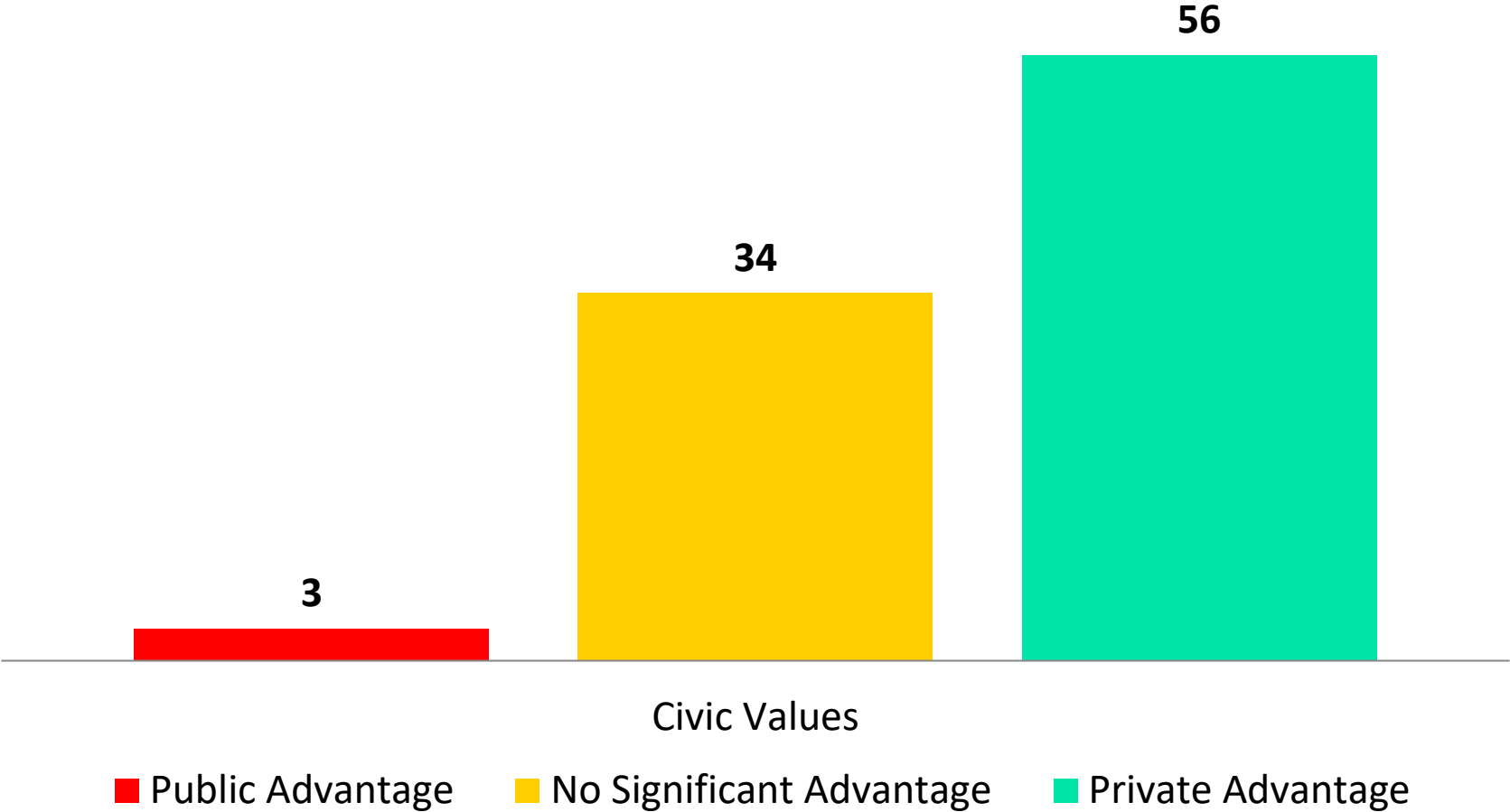
“Public governance of our schools matters for the health of our democracy.”

(Diane Ravitch and Carol Burris, *Washington Post*, November 4, 2018)

“...voucher programs could end up resembling the ethnic cleansing now occurring in Kosovo.”

(David Berliner, Legislative Testimony, May 1999)

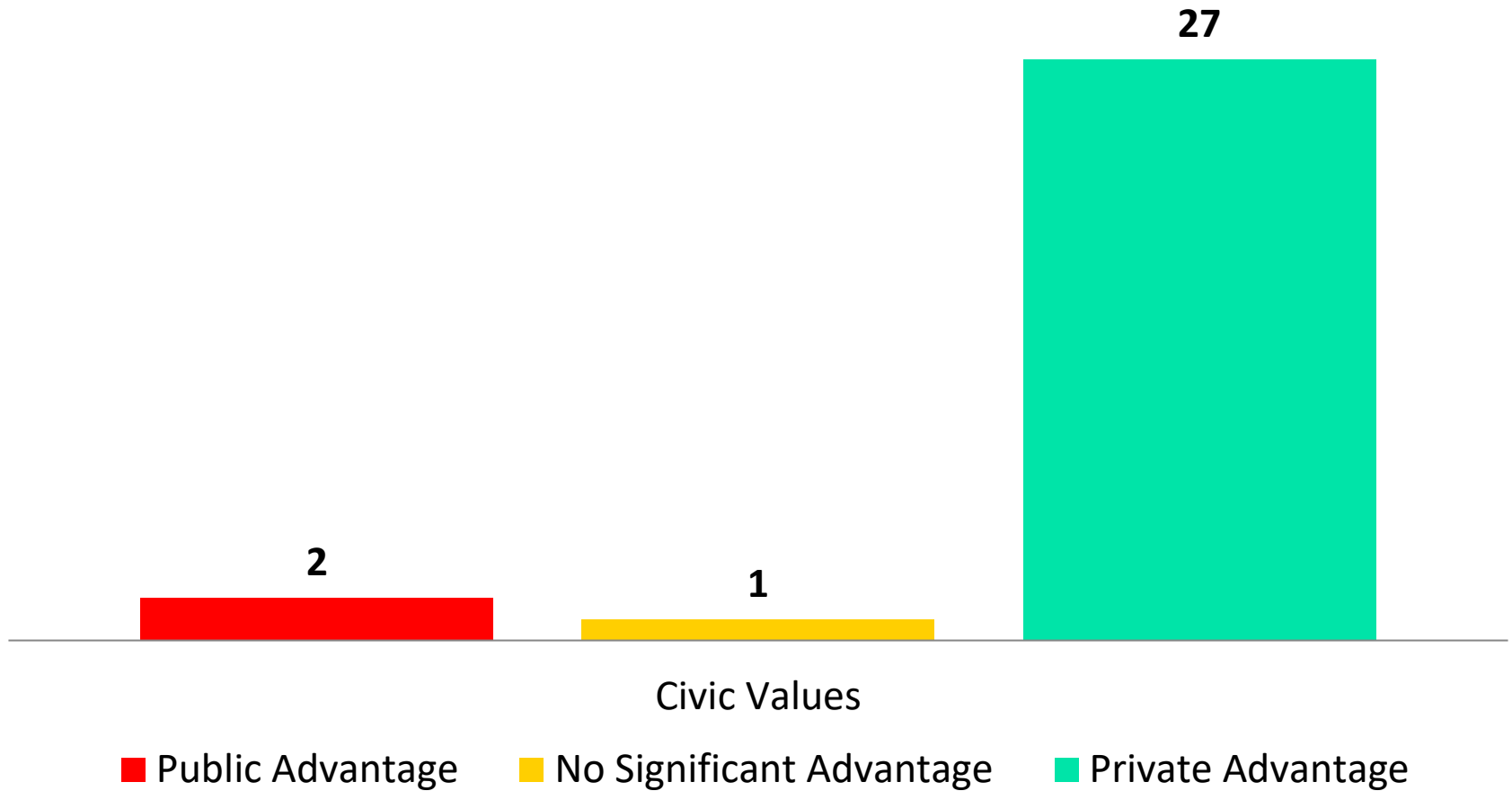
All Findings on Private School Choice & Civic Outcomes



Parent Satisfaction

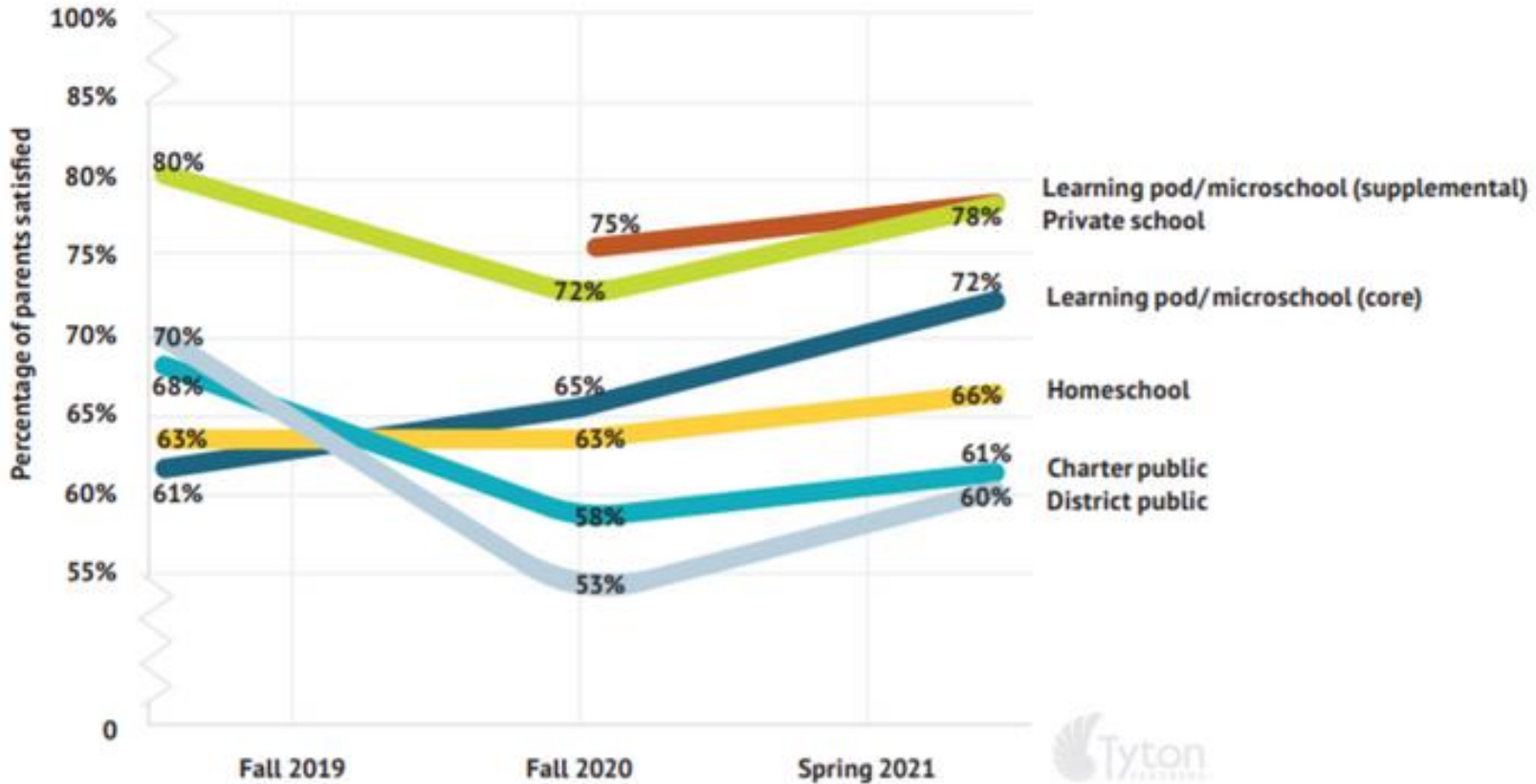


All Findings on Private School Choice & Parent Satisfaction



Parent Satisfaction Rates

Parent satisfaction, by school type and time period



District public n = 1,169-1,172
Homeschool n = 184-185

Charter public n = 127-128
Learning pod/microschool (core) n = 91-92

Private school n = 578-579
Learning pod/microschool (supplemental) n = 454-455

Summary: Private School Choice

- ✓ Tends to increase or have no effect on participant test scores
- ✓ Consistently drives participants to higher levels of educational attainment
- ✓ Helps the students left behind in public schools
- ✓ Boosts civic outcomes
- ✓ Makes parents happy



School Choice

It makes an
Olympic-sized
difference for
kids!

