

The Research Facts About Charter Schools and Vouchers

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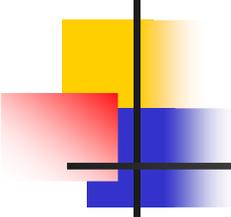
University of Arkansas – Fayetteville

Mayor's Education Summit

Anchorage, Alaska

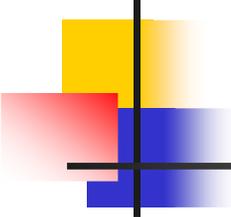
November 15-16, 2011





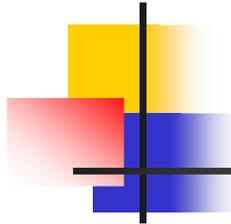
Policy Questions

1. Is there need for improvement in Alaska?
2. Could expanded school choice help?
3. What is school choice?
4. Do non-district choice programs primarily serve disadvantaged students?
5. What are the implementation challenges?
6. Do participating students benefit?
7. Do non-participating students benefit?
8. Do parents benefit?
9. Conclusions



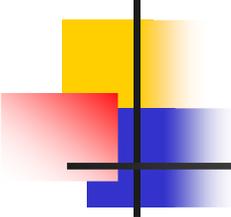
Alaska Educational Outcomes Compared to Other States

- On-time high school graduation rate of 71% equals national average
- Some disappointing NAEP scores:
 - 41st in 4th grade math
 - 31st in 8th grade math
 - 49th in 4th grade reading
 - 37th in 8th grade reading
 - 51st in 4-year gains for low-income students (-5)
- Serious achievement gaps persist



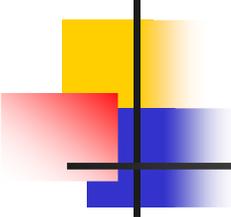
Key Policy Question

Would educational outcomes in Alaska improve with the expanded availability of school choice?



What is School Choice?

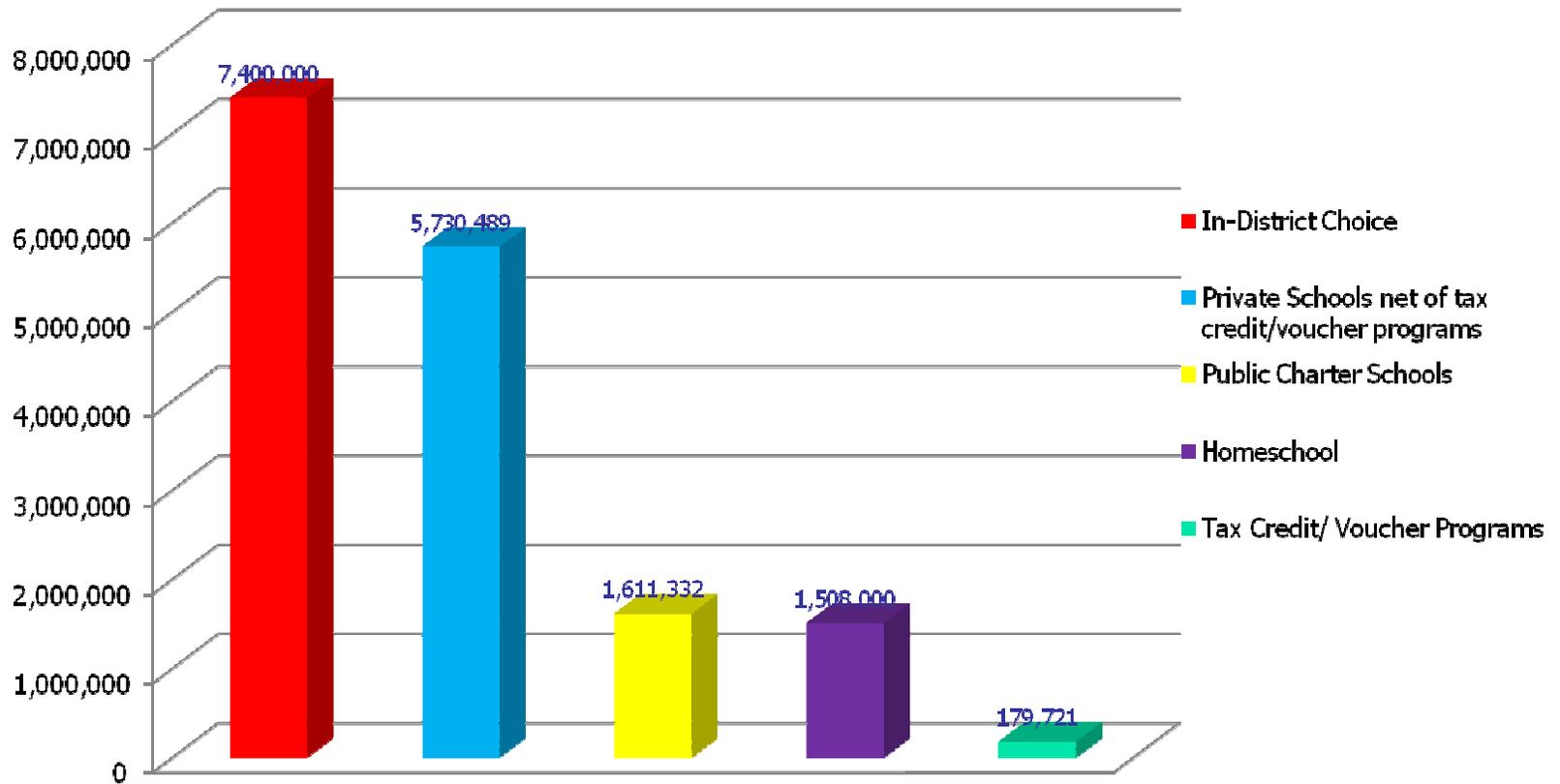
Any arrangement whereby student assignment to schools is governed by parent or student preference instead of address or administrative directive

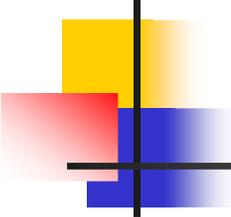


Two Key Distinctions

- Source of the Choice:
 - Constitutionally guaranteed – mortgage, self-financed private, homeschool
 - Policy-induced – all other forms
- Confines of the Choice:
 - Within a public school district – e.g. magnet, alternative, open enrollment
 - Outside a public school district – e.g. inter-district, independent charter, voucher, private, homeschool

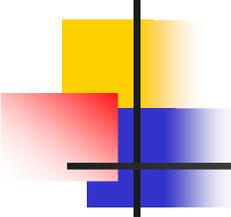
School Choice Participation Nationally





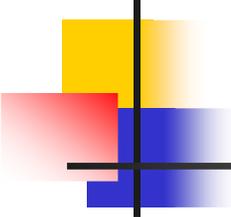
Does Choice Reach Disadvantaged Students: Charters

- Over 54% are poor, compared to 41% of all public school students (CER 2010; NCES 2010)
- Over 52% are minorities, compared to 44% of all public school students (CER 2010; NCES 2010)
- Tend initially to be behind educationally
 - Students in grade 3 of independent charters in Milwaukee are 7 percentiles lower in reading and math (Witte et al. 2010)
- Charters overwhelmingly locate in poor urban areas so that they can serve disadvantaged students



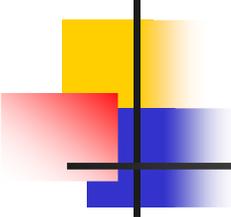
Does Choice Reach Disadvantaged Students: Vouchers

- Of the 11 tax-credit scholarship or ESA programs
 - 8 means-tested by law (AZ1, AZ2, FL, IN, IA, OK, PA, RI)
 - 1 means-tested by practice (GA)
 - 2 limited to students with disabilities or in foster care (AZ3, NC)
- Of the 14 government programs:
 - 6 only for students with disabilities (FL, GA, LA, OH, OK, UT)
 - 7 means-tested (Cleveland, CO, DC, IN, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Racine)
 - 3 limited to students from “needs improvement” schools (CO, New Orleans, OH)
 - Note – CO & New Orleans targeted by income and failing school
- At least 14% of students in voucher programs have disabilities compared to 12% in public schools (NCES 2010)



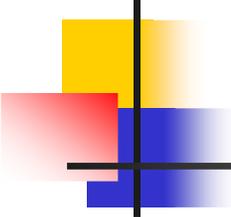
Profile of DC Opportunity Scholarship Program Recipients

- 90% African American
- 9% Hispanic
- Average family income of \$17,356
- 6% of mothers with college degrees
- 17% with diagnosed disability
- Average student at 33rd percentile in reading and 31st in math (Wolf et al. 2007)



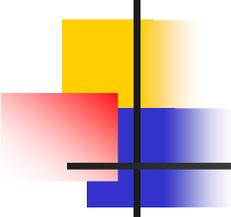
Challenges to Implementing Policy-Induced School Choice

- Awareness (e.g. No Child Left Behind choice, Milwaukee)
- Consumer information (corner store vs. shopping mall – Stewart and Wolf 2011)
- Transportation
- Adjustment
- Churn – 20%/year in voucher programs
- Independent charter authorizers



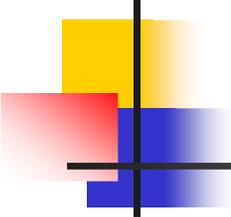
School Choice Boosts Educational Attainment

- How far you go in school enhances life outcomes
- Key benchmarks: high school (HS) graduation, college enrollment, college graduation
- Results for schools of choice:
 - KIPPsters complete college at four times the rate for low-income students (KIPP Nd)
 - Florida charters increase HS grad rates by 7-15 percentage points, college enrollment by 8-10 (Booker et al. 2008)
 - Milwaukee voucher program increases HS grad rate & college enrollment by 5-7 percentage points (Cowen et al. 2011)
 - DC Scholarship use boosts HS grad rate by 21 percentage points (Wolf et al. 2010)



School Choice and Student Test Scores

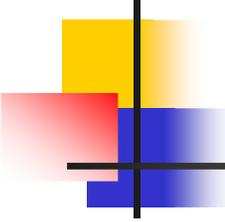
- Three truisms about test scores:
 1. They are lower in new schools
 2. They drop slightly when kids switch schools
 3. They are hard to move a long ways quickly
- Choice schools must deliver high and sustained value-added to have a clear positive effect on test scores in the short run



Charter Schools and Test Scores

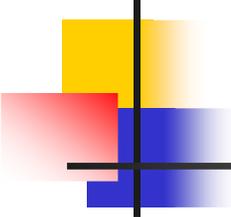
Overall results mixed (Betts & Tang 2011)
but most likely positive when:

1. Level is elementary or subject matter is math (Betts & Tang 2011)
2. School is well-established (e.g. Tuttle et al. 2010 KIPP study)
3. Student has been there awhile
4. Student is disadvantaged (CREDO 2009)
5. School was urban (Betts & Tang 2011)



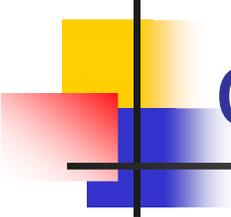
Vouchers and Test Scores

- All or some subgroups of students tend to show gains eventually
- Confirmed in 9 of 10 “gold standard” studies of 6 cities by 7 different research teams (Wolf 2008)
- Equal to about an extra month of learning per year
- Exact pattern of positive results varies but no negative effects found



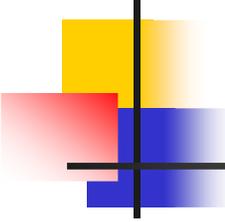
Competitive Effects of Charters on Achievement in TPS

- Relatively few studies
- Vary dramatically in quality
- More rigorous studies generally show that competition boosts achievement in TPS (Gray 2009; Sass 2006)
- Positive effects are modest in size



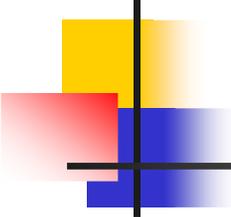
Competitive Effects of Vouchers on Achievement in TPS

- **6 studies in Florida – All positive** (Greene & Winters 2003; West & Peterson 2005; Chakrabarti 2004; Figlio & Rouse 2004; Rouse et al. 2007; Figlio & Hart 2010)
- **5 studies in Milwaukee – All positive** (Hoxby 2001; Greene & Forster 2002; Chakrabarti 2008; Carnoy et al. 2007; Greene & Marsh 2009)
- **2 studies in Arizona – Mix of positive and no effects** (Hoxby 2001; Greene & Forster 2002)
- **1 study in DC – no effects** (Greene & Winters 2006)



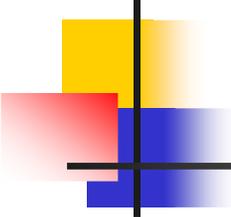
Overall Assessment of the Competitive Effects of School Choice

- “The above evidence shows reasonably consistent evidence of a link between competition (choice) and education quality. Increased competition and higher educational quality are positively correlated.” (Belfield & Levin 2002)
- Strongest when choice is extensive, options are high-quality, and dollars all travel with student (Moe 2008)
 - All apply to choice environment in Florida and Milwaukee
 - Not in DC -- program capped and public system held harmless



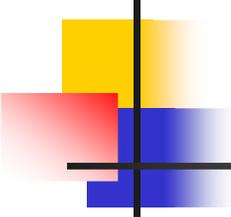
Voucher Programs Increase Parental Satisfaction with Schools

- Especially regarding curriculum, safety, parent-teacher relations, academics, religion
- Confirmed by all five “gold standard” studies that asked the question (e.g. Wolf et al. 2010; Howell & Peterson 2006; Greene 2001)
- Impacts are large & only slightly attenuate
- DC parents who graded schools A or B:
 - After 1 year -- 80% of voucher users compared to 50% of control group (Wolf et al. 2007)
 - After 4 years -- 78% of voucher users compared to 68% of control group (Wolf et al. 2010)



Summary of the Research on School Choice

1. Choice programs disproportionately serve disadvantaged students
2. They face known challenges that are surmountable
3. They deliver a variety of educational benefits to students under most circumstances
4. They tend to spur affected public schools to improve
5. Parents love them



For More Information

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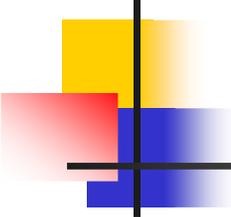
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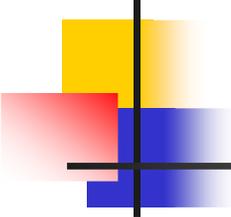
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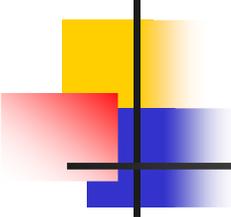
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