

Study Shows Louisiana School Voucher Program Hurt Math Scores

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The Louisiana school voucher program had a negative impact on students' test scores.

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Participating in the state's school voucher program leads to worse performance on state tests in math, according to [the latest study on the Louisiana Scholarship Program](#).

The Louisiana Scholarship Program gives lower-income families vouchers to attend private schools. About 7,000 students are in the program. To be eligible, families have to have incomes below 250 percent of the federal poverty level, and students have to be entering kindergarten or attend a public school labeled C, D or F on the state school grading system. The purpose was to give parents an alternative to public schools with low test scores.

The voucher program is independently evaluated each year, and students in the program have to take the same tests as students in public schools. University of Arkansas researcher Patrick Wolf studied the program for four years. He found that students who used the vouchers to attend a private school actually did worse on state tests.

"The students who participated in the voucher program, generally had lower test scores on the state accountability exam - most clearly in math," he said.

On the flip-side, Wolf said despite the losses in math, the students in the voucher program were just as likely to get into college as non-voucher students. Although the study could show students are getting less academic preparation in private schools, Wolf said students could be testing lower because private school curriculums may not match up with state tests.

Wolf also said the negative impacts on test scores tended to be concentrated in schools with lower tuition and lower enrollment. Some voucher schools did have positive impacts on scores in English and reading, according to the study.