

## **Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program**

### **Description of Program**

In June 1995 the Ohio legislature approved a plan to establish the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program. The program provides parents of students within the boundaries of the Cleveland City School District the opportunity to apply either: (1) for a tutoring grant to be used to obtain additional academic assistance for their child who continued to attend Cleveland public schools or (2) for a scholarship (i.e., a tuition voucher) that could be used to defray the cost of private school enrollment for their child. A focus of the program is to serve primarily low-income students whose family income is at or below the federal poverty index. The distribution of recipients reflects the proportion of African-American students within the Cleveland City School District. Additionally, no more than 25% of scholarship recipients can be previous private school students. Within these parameters, available tutoring grants and tuition vouchers were to be awarded randomly by lottery.

For the 1996-97 academic year, eligible students were those in kindergarten through third grade, with expected expansion of the program upward by one grade in each subsequent year. In 1998-99, scholarships were awarded to students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Families below two times the federal poverty index selected to receive the scholarships are awarded either up to 90% of the price of tuition at the private school they chose or \$2,250, whichever was less. For those families with greater incomes, scholarships provide 75% of the cost of private school tuition. Parents are responsible for the balance of tuition, often through work-in-lieu of payment arrangements with their child's school.

There are 43 private schools participating in the scholarship program: 32 Catholic, 8 of other Christian denominations, 1 Islamic, and 2 non-religious. Students used for this evaluation who did not receive a scholarship, but remained in the Cleveland City School District attended 81 public elementary schools.

### **Implementation Issues**

KPMG conducted an evaluation of the management and organizational effectiveness and efficiency of the program. They report:

Problems were encountered with record keeping, data management, and data verification;

- Communication with parents and with schools, including distribution of payments, has been disorganized and often has failed to reach the necessary audiences;
- Transportation has been an ongoing problem for the program, including a lack of dependability, cost, and dissatisfaction on the part of parents;

In addition, it is unknown to what extent student enrollment/admission into the private schools conforms to the guidelines stated in the legislation.

## Impacts on Voucher Students

### *1996-97:*

Indiana University compared third-grade scholarship recipients and public school students and found:

Before they entered the program, scholarship students were achieving at significantly higher levels in both vocabulary and reading comprehension scores than other public school students;

- No significant differences in third grade achievement scores between scholarship recipients and public school students across any of five subtests (Language Arts, reading, mathematics, social studies, and science)

Greene, Howell, and Peterson compared changes in fall to spring achievement test scores in two private schools newly established for scholarship recipients. Greene, et al. found:

A significant increase in reading, mathematics total, and mathematical concepts;

- In a re-analysis combining the Indiana University third grade data with their own, Greene et al. report:

**Third grade scholarship students achieved significantly higher than public school peers in language and science.**

### *1997-98:*

Continuing their work, Indiana University compared the same group of scholarship recipients and public school fourth graders and found:

Students who did not continue in the program after their third grade year had been achieving at significantly lower levels in third grade reading, science, and social studies than those students who continued with the program in fourth grade;

- Scholarship students attending pre-existing private schools perform better than public school peers in language, but there are no significant differences in reading, science, mathematics, or social studies;
- Scholarship students attending newly established private schools perform significantly less well in all tested areas than scholarship students attending pre-existing private schools or than their public school peers.

Greene et al. examined progress of students in the two new private schools and report:

Gains made by students in year one were diminished but still significant.

It is unknown whether or not students who are not doing well in the private schools are implicitly or explicitly encouraged to leave the program. Furthermore, the effect of participation in the Scholarship program on students' academic achievement, attendance, conduct, and commitment is not yet clear.

## **Impacts on Voucher Schools**

Indiana University conducted surveys of parents, teachers, administrators, and students. They found:

Scholarship class size was significantly smaller than public school class size, public school teachers were more likely to have completed at least some coursework beyond baccalaureate level, and public school teachers had more years of teaching experience than teachers in scholarship classrooms;

- There are substantial differences between public and private school classrooms and schools in terms of student enrollment, number of classes per grade level, and teachers' education level and experience;
- Public school teachers perceive no impact on their schools or themselves, private school teachers perceive both positive and negative effects.

Several questions remain to be investigated:

It is not clear what impact the Scholarship program will have on either the public or private schools that are affected;

- While there are substantial differences in some factors associated with the classrooms in which scholarship and public school students learn, little is known about the types of instructional interactions that occur in these classrooms;
- Do private schools discourage (implicitly or explicitly) voucher students with behavior or academic problems from enrolling? Conversely, do public schools in any way encourage students with academic or behavior problems to pursue a voucher?
- Under what conditions would the private schools begin to add classes or open new schools to meet the increased demands created by the voucher program (they have not done so to date)?
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It may not be possible to investigate:

Impact of the program on the educational "market"

Program too limited in size and scope

- Focused only on low-income families
- Tuition not fully funded
- Generalizability/Replicability of program to other areas, populations, contexts.

## **Impacts on Parents and Families of Voucher Students**

In a survey of Cleveland parents, Greene, Howell, and Peterson found:

The primary reasons for interest in the scholarship program include improved academic quality, safety, school location, and religion;

- Of parents who declined scholarships, reasons cited included: they were not aware they had been offered a scholarship, transportation problems, lack of admission to private school of their choice, and financial considerations;
- Recipient parents were much more satisfied with virtually every aspect of their children's schools than non-recipients;
- Minority recipients were slightly less satisfied with private schools than non-minority recipients.

### ***1998-99:***

Indiana University conducted surveys of parents, teachers, administrators, and students. They found:

Participation in the Scholarship program appears to substantially improve parents' perceptions of and satisfaction with their children's schools;

- Parents who apply for the Scholarship program are likely to be better educated, and more interested, motivated, and involved than parents who do not apply.

What is not known:

Though Cleveland Public Schools offer all parents the choice of their child's school, how many parents explicitly choose the school their child attends?

- Why is the proportion of eligible families who apply for the program so small?

### **Costs**

KPMG also reported they did not find a direct financial effect of the program on Cleveland Public Schools in the early years of the program.

In addition, the exact cost of the program and per student expenditures have not been clearly or completely established. What is the true per pupil expenditure for the population of students who participate in the voucher program, in public schools and in private schools (i.e., excluding expenditures not related to this population, and including all sources of parish or non-tuition resources)?

### **Supply Response of Other Schools**

No data available

### **Effects on Support for Public Education**

No data available

### **Effects on Public Policy Making**

No data available

### **Plan of Action**

Continued data collection on students in each of the four groups who were initially tested as first-graders in 1998-99 to examine achievement, attendance, educational progress and motivation;

- Examination of classroom instructional differences between public and private school classrooms, and student-teacher interactions for scholarship and non-scholarship students;
- Follow-up of parent surveys to further examine reasons for choice, ongoing satisfaction with choice, impact of legal uncertainty;
- Follow-up of teacher and administrator surveys to further examine impact of the program on both public and private schools;
- Development of consistent, reliable indicators of student attendance, behavior, and motivation across schools.