



School Choice in Cleveland The Positive Research Story

In 1995, a bipartisan coalition in the Ohio Legislature expanded educational choices for low-income parents in the troubled Cleveland City School District. The Legislature's action responded to problems of low academic achievement and chronic violence in Cleveland schools.

Through the Cleveland Scholarship Program, parents may enroll their children in private Cleveland schools or suburban public schools. The program has grown from 1,994 students in 1996-97 to more than 4,000 this year.

Separate research teams at Indiana University and Harvard University have made independent evaluations of the pioneering Cleveland program. The Indiana researchers identify similarities between Cleveland's program and other school choice initiatives. The Indiana team's most recent report says:

"Most studies have found that voucher programs, whether publicly or privately-funded, tend to promote more positive parental or family attitudes toward school, increase parental involvement, and result in increased parental satisfaction. In addition, the limited, but statistically significant positive impact on the program on students' academic achievement, particularly as they progress beyond the early primary grades, is consistent with work in Milwaukee, New York, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio."

Cleveland Scholarship Beneficiaries

"The program effectively serves the population of families and children for which it was intended and developed. The program was designed to serve low-income students..." (Indiana University, 1999)

"The average family income...was \$16,000...Scholarship recipients were more likely to live in single-parent families and less likely to have a child in a program for gifted or talented students...[R]ecipients were more likely than public school [students] to be African American..." (Harvard University, 1999)

Achievement of Cleveland Scholarship Beneficiaries

Scholarship "students in existing private schools had significantly higher test scores than public school students in language (45.0 versus 40.0) and science (40.0 versus 36.0)." (Indiana University, 1999)

Students "enrolled in the Scholarship Program for the full three years continue to perform slightly, but statistically significantly, higher" than public school students. (Indiana University, 2001)

Parent Satisfaction in Cleveland

Parents of scholarship students "tend to be much more satisfied with their child's school than other parents...[S]cholarship recipient parents are more satisfied with the child's teachers, more satisfied with the academic standards at the child's school, more satisfied with order and discipline, [and] more satisfied with social activities at the school..."

Parents of scholarship students "remained considerably more satisfied with their school than parents of students in public schools." (Harvard University, 1999)

Copies of the Cleveland research is available from the Indiana Center for Evaluation (www.indiana.edu/~iuce/) and Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Government (www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/).

**Parental School Choice is
Widespread —
Unless You're Poor.**



Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org or www.baeo.org