List of CSF Studies in order of their appearance in this PDF document

- An Evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund, May 2001 (Harvard study)
- Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, NYC and Washington DC, August, 2000 (Harvard) *Executive summary only, full study has been mailed*
- Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore Academic Performance of Scholarship Recipients in the 2005-2006 School Year, 2007 (Practical Research, independent evaluation consultancy)
- BASIC Fund Evaluation: Final Report. July 2007 (See Change)
- Effect of School Choice: An Evaluation of Charlotte CSF Program, August, 2000 (Jay P. Greene)
- Evaluation Report on CSF Philadelphia, September, 2003 and 2006 update (Frontier21Education Solutions/University of Pennsylvania Center for Urban Studies)
- Baseline Findings for an Evaluation of CSF in Los Angeles, March, 2006 (Denise Quigley)
- KidsFirst Minneapolis 2005 8th Grade Results, 2005 (internal Minneapolis study)
- KidsFirst Minneapolis Graduation Survey Results, 2006 (internal Minneapolis study)
- CSF New Orleans Parent Survey, 2003 (internal)
- Evaluation Survey of CSF NYC Families & Schools, August, 2001 (internal)

Below is a list of several other CSF studies that do not appear in this document. Hard copies have been mailed to the Clear Fund:

- Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, NYC and Washington DC, August, 2000 (Harvard)
- CSF-Los Angeles: SAT 9 Trend Analysis Results, October, 2003 (Denise Quigley)
- Memphis Opportunity Scholarship Trust: A Descriptive & Comparative Study of the 2002/2003 School Year, 2003 (Christian Brothers University)
- Using Experimental Economics to Measure the Effects of a Natural Educational Experiment on Altruism, September, 2004 (Case Western University)
- Staying With the Program: A Report of CSF Retention, October 2002 (internal)
- CSF Newark Program Effectiveness Parent Survey, April 2003 (internal Newark study)
- CSF Newark Scholarship Recipient Test Score Study, Fall, 2003 (internal Newark study)

An Evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund

by

Paul E. Peterson
Director, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University
Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University

David E. Campbell
Research Associate, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University

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The Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) is located within the Taubman Center on State and Local Government, John F. Kennedy School of Government and within the Center for American Political Studies, Department of Government, Harvard University. Mailing address: Taubman 306, Kennedy School of Government, 79 J.F.K. Street, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: 617-495-7976/495-8312; Fax 617-496-4428
Website: www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/

An Evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund

(Executive Summary)

In 1999, the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) announced that it would award scholarships enabling low-income families across the United States to send their children in grades K-8 to the private school of their choice. The families of over 1.25 million children applied for scholarships; 40,000 were awarded. Because more families applied than could receive scholarships, recipients were chosen by lottery, enabling the research methodology of a randomized field trial to evaluate the program.

The power of random assignment combined with the size and national scope of the CSF offers researchers an unmatched look at the effects of attending private schools on both parents and students. This evaluation reports on the results of a telephone survey administered to applicants at the conclusion of the first school year in which CSF scholarships were used. Over 2,300 applicants and 850 children in applicant families in grades 4 through 8 were surveyed. Questions were asked on a variety of subjects, including the level of satisfaction with the school, reasons for choosing a school, experiences within the school, and family background characteristics.

Tables 2-20 display comparisons between families who, upon receipt of a scholarship, opted to have their children attend a private school, and families whose children remained in public schools. In each of these tables, column 1 contains the results for parents whose children attended a private school in the previous year or for the private school students themselves; column 2 displays the results for public school parents and students. The third column reports the difference between columns 1 and 2, which tells us the impact of switching from a public to a private school.

Because scholarships were awarded by lottery, on average there are no demographic differences between families who were offered scholarships and families that were not. Table 21, however, presents the demographic characteristics of families who were offered a scholarship and made use of it ("takers") and those who were offered one but did not use it ("decliners").

Tables 22 and 23 compare families who were *offered* a scholarship and those who were not. In Table 22, therefore, we examine the effect of the *CSF program* (not of attending a private school) on the reasons people choose the schools they do. Similarly, in Table 23 we report the effect of the CSF on whether students are attending the school their parents prefer. The final two tables (Tables 24 and 25) are restricted to scholarship takers only because they deal with characteristics of private schools (religious affiliation and tuition respectively).

All differences discussed in the text are statistically significant at conventional levels unless otherwise noted.

The main findings are as follows:

- Parents whose children are in private schools are more likely to award their school an "A" grade than public school parents—72% versus 16%. The average private school grade is an A-, while on average the public schools only score an average of C+. Private school students are also more likely to give their school an "A," although the difference is not statistically significant. Paradoxically, fewer private school students report that they "like school a lot," although again the difference between private and public school students is not statistically significant.

- Private school parents are more likely to report that they are "very satisfied" with their schools' academic quality, safety, discipline, and the values taught in the school. For example, 68% of parents whose children are in private schools are "very satisfied" with the academic quality of their school, compared to 23% of public school parents. More private school parents are also "very proud" of their child's school. Among youth, more private school students report that "students are proud" to attend their school, although the difference—55% versus 35%—is not statistically significant.

- Discipline problems are less common in private than public schools, at least as reported by parents. Fewer private school parents rate fighting, cheating, stealing, gangs, racial conflict, guns, and drugs as serious problems in their schools. While almost half of public school parents report fighting to be a problem in their child's school, none of the private school parents did. Fewer private school students report that disruptions in school are common—only 7.8%, contrasted with 56.8% of public school students.

- Generally, private schools have fewer facilities and programs than public schools. For example, while 89% of public schools have a nurse's office, only two-thirds of private schools do. Two exceptions stand out, however: private schools are more likely to have individual tutors and an after-school program, although only the former difference is statistically significant. When comparing parents of children with learning disabilities, private school parents are also more likely to report that their school attends to their child's needs "very well" (this difference of 43 percentage points is large but due to the small numbers involved is not statistically significant).

- Private schools are smaller than public schools, as are their class sizes. While the average (approximate) size of private schools is 230 students, public schools are over twice as large, with more than 500 students. Similarly, public school classrooms average 24 students, while private schools have an average class size of 20 students.

- Private school parents are more likely to report that teachers "always" show them respect. Private school students are less likely to report that the rules for behavior in their school are strict. Only 15% of students in private schools hold this opinion, compared to 93% of their public school counterparts. Similarly, students in private schools report far (but not significantly) less frequently that their teachers put them down.

- More private school students attend a school that has a student population that, according to parents, is composed of less than 10% minority students. More public

school students attend schools that are over 90% minority. Among students, there were negligible differences between public and private school attendees in behavioral measures of racial integration—whether they eat lunch or are friends with youth of different races. When these same comparisons are made for African-Americans only, fewer private school students attended a school that has a student body that is over 90% minority. More African-American private school students attend schools that range from "less than 10%" to "50% to 90%" minority. None of these differences for African-Americans only, however, are statistically significant. More Black students in private schools report eating lunch with students of other races. They also have more friends who are of a different race. Again, these differences are not statistically significant.

- While private school parents and students report that their schools assign slightly more homework than do public schools, the differences do not achieve statistical significance.

- Public and private school parents display essentially no differences in the number of parent-teacher conferences attended, the frequency of volunteering in the school, and communication with other parents whose children attend the same school. Private school parents report a higher frequency of communicating with teachers by telephone. Private school students are more likely to report that their parents are well informed about their schools, but slightly less likely to report that they talk to their parents about school regularly (differences not significant). Private and public school parents are equally likely to know their children's friends.

- A slightly smaller percentage of private school parents choose the statement "a school works better when a family pays tuition" over "a school works better when all the costs are paid for by taxes." The difference is not statistically significant.

- Although more private school students will enroll in the same school next year (82% to 72%), this difference is not statistically significant. The difference between the public and private sectors is largely explained by the fact that when asked why their child will not return to the same school, more public school parents report that this is because she is graduating from her school. This is almost certainly due to the fact that middle schools are much less common in the private than in the public sector. Roughly 5% of private school parents report that their child will not re-enroll because their child's school is too expensive, compared to essentially no public school parents (a difference that is statistically significant). A handful of public school students were asked not to return; no private school students were asked to find another school. There are no significant differences in the suspension rates of private and public school students.

- Private school parents are more likely to report satisfaction with the location of their child's school. There is essentially no difference in the length of time taken by private and public school students to get to school.

- While more private school students report that they expect to continue their education beyond college, the 16 percentage-point difference is not statistically significant.

- There are no meaningful differences in the reported relations between peers in public and private schools. Private and public school students are equally likely to report that students get along with each other and that other students make fun of them.

- Private school students attend religious services slightly more often, but participate in religious youth groups slightly less often. They are also less likely to participate in scouting or play team sports. None of these differences, however, reach statistical significance.

- There are no differences between public and private school students in their levels of political tolerance or political knowledge.

- The demographic characteristics of those who used the scholarship offered them ("takers") with those who did not ("decliners") differ in some but not all respects. An equal percentage of taker and decliner children have learning disabilities (13%). Mothers of students who used the scholarships are more likely to have a college degree and less likely to work full time. They also attend religious services more frequently. They are more likely to have lived in their current residence for two or more years. More of them are white; thus fewer are African-American and Hispanic. A greater percentage are Catholic. The household income of taker families is slightly higher than decliners. (All of these differences are statistically significant.) Mothers of taker and decliner students are equally likely to be "born-again" Christians. They are also the same average age. The percentage of two-parent households is the same across the two groups.

Tables 22 and 23 compare the effect of receiving the *offer* of a scholarship, rather than the effect of switching from public to private schools.

- Parents offered a scholarship were more likely to report that academic quality and religious considerations were the most important reason for choosing their school. They were also less likely to report that location was the most important criterion, and fewer of them said that their child's school was the "only choice" available.

- 72% of parents offered a scholarship gained admission to their preferred school, contrasted with 61% of those who were not offered a scholarship. A smaller percentage of parents who received an offer reported that they could not afford the cost of their preferred school, although the difference between those who did and did not receive an offer was only 4%. Fewer parents who received an offer said that there was no space available at their preferred school.

Tables 24 and 25 include scholarship takers only.

- A majority—53%—of students using CSF scholarships attended Catholic schools. The second most common type of school was a non-denominational Christian school (20%). 8% of CSF users attended a school that is not religious in character. The remainder attended schools sponsored by various faiths, including Baptist, Lutheran, and Jewish.

- 40% of CSF takers pay between $1,000 and $2,000 in tuition, with 26% spending $500 to $1,000 and 25% between $2,000 and $4,000. In total, 69% spend less than $2,000, and 94% spend less than $4,000.

AN EVALUATION OF THE CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell

The mission of the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) is "to maximize educational opportunity . . . by offering tuition assistance for needy families."* To that end, in 1999 CSF announced that it would award scholarships enabling low-income families across the United States to send their children in grades K-8 to the private school of their choice. The families of over 1.25 million children applied for scholarships; 40,000 were awarded. Because more families applied than could receive scholarships, recipients were chosen by lottery, enabling the research methodology of a randomized field trial to evaluate the program.

The power of random assignment combined with the size and national scope of CSF offer researchers an unparalleled look at the effects of attending private schools on students' experiences, as they and their parents perceive them. The study builds on previous reports issued by Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG), which used a similar methodology to evaluate CSF-related

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programs in three cities—the School Choice Scholarships Foundation program in New York City, the Washington Scholarship Fund program in Washington, D.C., and Parents Advancing Choice in Education in Dayton. Ohio.[1] Now, it is possible to see whether the impacts of the CSF-related programs observed in these three cities are duplicated in the CSF program established for low-income families nationwide. For the most part, the answer is yes; the results reported below resemble those observed in the earlier studies of the CSF-related programs in New York City, Washington, D. C. and Dayton.

This national CSF evaluation is more limited than PEPG's evaluations of the CSF-related programs in these three cities, however. In the three cities we were able to both interview families and administer tests of reading and math achievement. In this national study it was not possible to obtain test-score data.[2] But we can ascertain whether nationwide parental and student assessments resemble those in the three cities. To the extent that they do, some readers may conclude that test-score results from the three cities have nationwide implications. However, we cannot provide direct evidence on this point.

The report proceeds as follows. First, we briefly review the results from the evaluations of the CSF programs in New York, Washington, D. C. and Dayton. Next, we describe the design of the national CSF program as well as the methodology we use to evaluate the program. We then report the effects of participating in the CSF program on both parents and students. In addition to the quantitative results, we also include quotations from focus groups discussions that have been held with CSF applicants. Their words provide illuminating details of *how* a program like CSF affects the educational opportunities and experiences of its participants. Finally, we provide data on the kinds of

families who chose to use a scholarship, the criteria parents used when choosing schools, and the types of schools CSF recipients have chosen to attend.

Previous Findings

After one-year of participation in the CSF programs in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio the average overall test score performance for African-American students who switched from public to private schools was 3.3 National Percentile Ranking points higher than the performance of those who remained in public schools.[3] After two years, their performance was 6.3 points higher. No gains or losses were found for students of other racial and/or ethnic groups (see Table 1). These results are consistent with another evaluation of a CSF-funded scholarship program in Charlotte, North Carolina, where after one year students who switched from public to private schools in the predominantly African-American population showed a gain of 6 percentile points.[4]

A difference of 6.3 points is moderately large, especially when it takes place over a short two-year time period. Private-schooling is not a magic bullet that transforms students over night. Elementary and secondary education is a long, painstaking process to which most people devote 13 years of their life. To get a sense of the magnitude of a 6.3 point difference in test scores, consider the much-discussed gap in test scores of blacks and whites. On average, past research has shown this gap to consist of approximately one standard deviation—a statistical term indicating that black students scoring in the upper third of their ethnic group perform at the same level as the average white student.[5] If this gap could be eliminated, it has been shown, average black earnings would increase to

approximately 90 percent of white earnings. For this reason, many people feel that closure of the test-score gap is one of the most important civil-rights objectives remaining.

The 6.3 point gain in test scores for African-Americans after two years equals about one-third of a standard deviation, or one-third of the test-score gap. If the remaining two-thirds could be closed in subsequent years of elementary and secondary schooling, the social impact would be of great significance.

Another way of thinking about the observed impact of the CSF programs is to consider the recent evaluation of a class size reduction in Tennessee from 24 to 16 students, an intervention which if implemented nationwide would increase the cost of schooling by approximately 33 percent. African-American students in smaller classes gained 4.9 NPR points, or nearly as much as was obtained from the CSF scholarship programs, suggesting that such a policy would also reduce the test-score gap.[6] However, the benefit-cost ratio for the CSF intervention was much larger than the Tennessee class-size intervention, which would cost hundreds of billions of dollars to introduce nationally.

As another point of comparison, the RAND study of *Improving School Achievement* reports what are said to be "remarkable" one-year gains in some states that have rigorous statewide testing programs (e.g., Texas and North Carolina) that are "as much as 0.06 to 0.07 standard deviation[s] per year," or 0.12 to 0.14 standard deviations over two years. Some have disputed this finding, but should it be correct the gain would indeed be remarkable, as testing programs do not involve major new expenditures in the same way the class-size reductions do. However, the impact of the CSF scholarship

programs on the test scores of African-American students was over twice as large as those the RAND study reports.

Not only did the CSF scholarship program enhance the test-score performance of African-American students in New York, D. C., and Dayton, but both parents and students report that their school experiences were greatly improved in other ways as well. Parents whose children have moved from public to private schools report much higher levels of satisfaction than parents whose children remained in public schools. This includes measures of overall satisfaction (like the grade given to the school), as well as more specific items that inquire about school safety, discipline, academic rigor, the values taught by the school, and location. Also, parents of students in private schools are less likely than public-school parents to report that an array of problems are "serious" at their child's school, including fighting, cheating, and stealing. And according to parental estimates, private schools also have smaller student populations and smaller class sizes. They also assign more homework than public schools. Public schools, however, generally have more facilities and programs than schools in the private sector.

In these three cities, parents most frequently identified academic quality as the primary reason for choosing a particular school for their child. Other considerations were important for some, including the religious instruction offered by a school and whether the school seems safe, but none is cited as consistently as academic quality.

At the time that the lottery was held, students who used the scholarship did not score higher on standardized tests than students who did make use of the scholarship. The one exception to this pattern was older students (entering grades 6 through 8) in the District of Columbia; scholarship students had higher scores than those who declined the

scholarship. Families who made use of scholarships in these three cities were only modestly more advantaged than those who decline a scholarship when it is offered. Their incomes were generally a little higher (except in Dayton, where they were a little lower). The percentage of mothers with a college education was also a little higher, and scholarship families were less likely to be welfare dependent.

CSF Program Details

The eligibility for CSF scholarships is straightforward. First, applicant families had to have at least one child in grades K-8 (although because of the difficulty in comparing kindergarten to grade school, our evaluation only includes families with children in grades 1-8). Second, families had to be of low to moderate income. The scholarship amounts were determined on a sliding income scale—the lower a family's income, the higher the amount of the scholarship. For example, a family of four with a household income of $16,450 (the federally-determined poverty line) could receive a scholarship covering up to 75% tuition at the private school of their choice. With an income of $44,415 (270% of the poverty line), that same family would receive a scholarship to cover 25% of tuition. An income of $30,433 would allow the family to receive 50% of tuition. If a family won the lottery, all of their children were awarded a scholarship. Scholarships were awarded in April 1999, to be used for the upcoming school year. Our survey was administered in June-August 2000, at the conclusion of that first school year.

Research Design

While there have been other evaluations of scholarship programs, these have been restricted to individual cities. In each case, an open question remains whether the findings are idiosyncratic to those particular communities. CSF is the first *national* scholarship program; the findings reported here are not an artifact of the educational context of a given city and may be presumed to have national implications.[7]

Data Collection

A sample of all families who applied for a CSF scholarship was surveyed in the summer of 2000 by telephone. Those surveyed included both those families offered a scholarship and those who were not. In other words, the evaluation took the form of a randomized field trial, with one group, called the "treatment group," receiving a scholarship offer, while the other group, the "control group," was not offered a scholarship. Since the two groups were created by a random process, they can be expected to be similar, on average, in all respects except for the offer of the scholarship.[8]

Applicants were surveyed at the conclusion of the first school year in which recipients were able to use their scholarships. The sample was randomly drawn from the master list of CSF applicants.[9] In addition to interviews with parents, students in grades 4 through 8 were also interviewed (with their parents' permission). A total of 2,368 adults participated in the survey: 464 who were offered and used a scholarship, 1,116 who were offered and declined a scholarship, and 788 who were not offered a scholarship. Eight hundred and seventy-two children were surveyed: 177 whose families were offered and used a scholarship, 411 whose families were offered and declined a scholarship, and 282 whose families were not offered a scholarship.

The parent survey was administered to "the parent or caretaker" of the child or children in the home. The response rate to the telephone survey was 46 percent, comparable to response rates of other national telephone surveys and relatively high for a low-income (and thus transient) population like the one being evaluated here. Response rates were almost identical for treatment and control groups.[10] Despite random assignment to the treatment and control groups and the similar response rates from the two groups, there are small differences in the racial composition, education levels, and religious affiliation of the two groups. All results are weighted to adjust for differences in the demographic characteristics of the two groups.[11] Because these differences were small, the weights have only a minimal effect on the results.

To facilitate comparisons, parents were asked about the experiences of only one of their children in grades 1-8. If the family had more than one child in this age cohort, they were asked to report on the child who was next to have a birthday (a technique that maintains randomization and comparability). The next-birthday children were also the ones interviewed, if they were in grades 4 through 8.

Parents were asked a variety of questions about their level of satisfaction with their child's school, the experiences their child had at school, and the experiences the parent had with the school's administrators and teachers. Other questions inquired about school facilities, plans for the following year, and the reasons for any changes in school attendance plans. Parents were also asked about their involvement with their child's school and their interaction with other parents whose children attend the school. In a shorter survey, students were asked some questions resembling those asked of parents. In addition, students were asked about their educational expectations, peer group relations,

and extra-curricular activities. Finally, students were also asked a battery of questions designed to gauge their training as citizens, including inquiries into the extent of their political knowledge and tolerance.

Data Analysis

If everyone who was offered a scholarship used it, our analysis could simply compare those who were offered one with those who were not. However, only 29 percent of the lottery winners used the scholarship. This complicates our evaluation. If we were to simply compare these two groups, we would be comparing a "treatment" group in which 71 percent of the membership had not been "treated," producing misleading results. However, we cannot simply compare those who actually used the scholarship with the control group, who shall be called the "takers", because the takers differed from the decliners in important respects.

This type of problem is not unique to evaluations of scholarship programs. Medical researchers evaluating a new drug have the same type of concern, namely how to deal with the fact that not everyone who is offered a medication in a drug trial will take it as prescribed—or take it at all. To solve the problem, we thus followed the same procedure used by medical researchers, an instrumental variable analysis that obtains unbiased estimates by employing a two-stage regression model. In the first stage of the model, we predicted the probability with which the student attends a private school based upon whether or not she was offered a voucher. With these predicted values included in the second-stage equation, one can recover unbiased estimates of the impact of switching from a public to a private school.[12] While this two-stage technique was first used in

medical research, whenever possible, it has become standard practice in econometric studies of social interventions.[13]

Some effects that we report are quite large but not statistically significant. When only 29 percent of the families use a scholarship, the research technique employed here, even though it provides unbiased estimates, cannot ascertain whether they might have occurred by chance unless the sample size is considerable and/or the effects are substantively large. In the case of student reports many large effects are not statistically significant because we have many fewer students than parents participating in the survey. (As mentioned above, children in grades 1 to 3 were not surveyed.)

In addition to the statistical results reported for each item on the questionnaire, this report also incorporates verbatim comments made by parents who have applied for CSF scholarships. [14] The comments were made during separate, recorded focus-group conversations with three groups—families who were offered and used CSF scholarships, those who were offered and did not use a scholarship, and those who were not offered a scholarship. The focus-group sessions were conducted by PEPG senior staff members in Dayton, Ohio and Washington, D.C. at the same time students in these cities were being tested on their academic performance. From the assembled parents, roughly six to eight names were chosen randomly for participation in the focus groups, which lasted about a half-hour to forty-five minutes each. Parents were not required to participate, although most who were asked did so. Because anonymity was promised to those who took part, all identifying information—such as names of schools and children—have been removed from the statements quoted below. Otherwise, quotations are excerpted exactly as spoken, complete with their uneven syntax and vernacular prose.

The excerpts from the focus-group conversations serve a different purpose than the statistical results we report. They do not constitute a rigorous test of differences between the private and public school populations. But they do provide texture and detail that helps to illuminate the brief responses to questions posed in telephone surveys, bringing to life the consequences of having a child attend one type of school rather than another.

Impacts of CSF Program on Students and Families

The impact of the CSF program, as perceived by parents and students, is reported in tables 2–20. Column 1 contains the responses of the families whose child attended a private school in the previous year. Column 2 displays the results for the control group, the public school families who had applied for a scholarship but who did not win the lottery and whose children remained in public school. The third column reports the difference between columns 1 and 2, which tells us the impact of switching from a public to a private school. To obtain unbiased estimates of this impact, the results were generated using two-stage regression models described above.

Parental and Student Satisfaction

Many economists think that customer satisfaction is the best measure of the quality of any product, public and private schools included. Jay Greene has written that if education policy

> were almost any other policy realm or consumer issue we might consider the strong positive effect of school choice on parental satisfaction sufficient evidence to conclude that the program is beneficial to its participants. If, for example, people report that they are happier with the maintenance of public parks we would usually consider this as sufficient proof that efforts to improve the parks have

> succeeded. We would not normally feel obliged to count the number of items of trash and repair problems to verify reports of satisfaction.[15]

Most studies of scholarship programs for low-income minority families have found that families using scholarships are much more satisfied with their schooling than are families who remain in public schools.[16]

Just as students receive a grade at school, parents were asked to give their child's school a grade. As reported in Table 2, 72 percent of private school parents gave their child's school an A, compared to 16 percent of public school parents, an extraordinarily large difference of 55 percentage points. The average grade given by private school parents was an A-, compared to a C+ for parents of children who remained in public schools. Students were less generous, however. More private school than public school students gave their school an A (52 percent to 38 percent), but the difference is not statistically significant. The average grade for both groups was a B. Fewer private school students reported that they "like school a lot," though, again, the difference does not reach statistical significance.

Table 3 reports the percentage of parents who were "very satisfied" with four aspects of their child's school: academic quality, safety, discipline, and teaching values. In each case, more private school than public school parents reported a high level of satisfaction. For example, 68 percent of private school parents are very satisfied with the academic quality of the school their child attends, compared to 23 percent of public school parents. This finding was supported by focus-group conversations, where the academic rigor of private schools was often cited as a reason parents sought them out. In the words of one mother:

> My first daughter, she finished 6th grade in the public school, and I saw that she had a lot of potential and that she would be better off in a private school. This is her 2nd year in the private school and she is doing great. And they have a lot of classes and the academics are much, much better than the public system and they have more opportunity to go to college and more expectations for their future.[17]

When parents were asked about their satisfaction with safety at school, a similar 51 percentage point gap between private and public school parents appeared—71percent and 20 percent for the two groups, respectively. Questions that probed satisfaction with discipline and teaching values generated similar patterns of response. Fifty-eight percent of the private school parents were very satisfied with the discipline, and 69 percent were similarly satisfied with the teaching of values. For public-school parents, only 22 percent and 25 percent expressed similar levels of satisfaction with these two aspects of their child's school, respectively. These issues were often raised by parents in focus-group discussions. Take, for example, the words of a mother who had applied for a CSF scholarship but had not received one. In describing her child's public school, she said:

> [A] big problem at the school that my kids are in is discipline. With too many kids comes a lot of problems with discipline which all falls back to classroom size. My son came in late one day. I took him to school. He come in late. The teacher was trying to teach. I was speaking to the assistant. Just about the number of people that are here, the kids stood up and congregated over to the coat room behind my son...and I'm like, what is going on? Is he...is this a game? You know...what's going on? And I questioned him about it after school, why was everyone coming? And he said that's just what they do. And I was like, there's no way any learning is going on, if the teacher is teaching and a whole group of people are leaving to go do whatever it is they want to do. That falls back into... policy, discipline policy with the school.[18]

Many parents also expressed dismay that public schools do not emphasize values. Typical are the comments of this mother:

> I feel that if they bring the prayer back in school and bring the religion back in then we won't have all his gun shooting that we have, stabbing going on, all this

> violence that we have going on among the students and teachers. If they bring it back everybody will learn values. I really do feel that.[19]

Some parents also make a link between values and discipline, as exemplified by this quotation from a focus group participant.

> [K]ids nowadays seem like they don't respect their teachers. They think that it is a joke all the time and they don't have a lot of discipline and with more discipline problems than there used to be when there was prayer in schools. I think that it would bring a lot of values back.[20]

In addition to inquiring about satisfaction levels, we asked parents whether they felt proud of their child's school. Seventy percent of private school parents reported that they felt "very proud," contrasted with 25 percent of public school parents. More private school students also reported "students are proud" to attend their school (55 percent versus 35 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant.

School Disruptions

In an effort to gauge the level of disruption students experience in private and public schools, parents were asked whether the following problems are "very serious", "somewhat serious", or "not serious" at their child's school: fighting, cheating, stealing, gangs, racial conflict, guns, and drugs.[21] Table 4 displays the percentage of parents reporting that each problem is either "very" or "somewhat" serious. Far fewer private school parents ranked each problem as serious, with only drugs failing to reach statistical significance (recall that the age range of students is grades 1-8; drugs are likely to be a more serious problem for older students). For example, while 47 percent of public school parents report that fighting is a problem, no private school parents do.[22]

Our focus group discussions underscored how parents see the disciplinary environment within private schools. Consider the words of this mother, describing her child's private school:

> It [discipline] is very strict. The children they know right off from the very beginning that if you do something inappropriate you are out. I mean out….they will put you out of the school. I don't know if cheating…it is a very serious offense, if you cheat on a test. Any type of vandalism is very serious….suspension, perhaps forever….you won't be allowed back. Fighting is just not allowed or any sassiness toward the teacher. It is just very strict so therefore….they don't have that problem, not never ever, but it is very strict. There is no uniform but there is a dress code. They allow your freedom of expression but there are certain things that you can not wear to school. So they do try to discipline how you carry yourself as growing adults.[23]

Even though this parent raises the possibility of expulsion as a disciplinary tool, we did not find a difference in the suspension or expulsion rates of private and public schools (see discussion below).

Another mother described the strict discipline within her son's private school, comparing it to the public school her other son attends:

> At [name of private school] it is the same thing. They don't tolerate disruptions in the class and he is only in kindergarten. He gets out of line in the kindergarten and they will call or they will send a note home and his types of notes is a sad face but the teacher will put an explanation, like I said for the kindergarten. I don't know how it is above, but they do not tolerate any disruptions any misbehaviors, they address it quickly. [Son's name], who is at [name of public school], they have graffiti on the walls, but I have not been called too much for things happening in his school, but I don't know how they discipline there but, there is graffiti and things on the walls. I think that whoever…should clean it up or something like that. So in that respect I don't think that discipline is as tight.[24]

When students were asked about their experience in school, a much higher percentage of public school students reported they "strongly agree" that "other students often disrupt class." As table 4 shows, 57 percent of public-school students reported that

disruption is common, contrasted with 8 percent of private- school students. This 49-point gap is statistically significant.

Along similar lines, more public than private school students "strongly agree" that they "do not feel safe at school," although the difference is not statistically significant. But while a greater proportion of private school parents report that cheating is not a problem in their children's schools, more private school students "strongly agree" that "some teachers ignore cheating when they see it." Again, however, the gap is not statistically significant. Private and public school students do not differ in the number of their friends they say "get in trouble with their teachers" (on average, both groups say one out of their four best friends does).

School Facilities

Nationwide, average private school tuition in 1993-94 was estimated at $3,116 with students at Catholic schools (the type of school in which most CSF users enroll) paying an average of $2,178. This is considerably less than public school expenditure per pupil, which was $7,305.[25] (Admittedly, tuition does not necessarily represent the full cost of educating a child, but it is the best approximation we have of per-pupil expenditures in private schools). Private-school teacher salaries in that year were less than $22,000, as compared to an average of over $34,000 in the public sector.[26] High-prestige private schools, often affiliated with mainline Protestant churches, are a rarity. Sidwell Friends and St. Albans in the District of Columbia are prominent in the public's mind, in part because President Clinton's daughter and Vice President Gore's children attended them. But these well-appointed schools are the exception, not the norm.

Consistent with this pattern, the higher levels of satisfaction with private schools does not appear to be due to the extensiveness of their programs and facilities. Parents were asked whether their child's school has a variety of material resources and programs: a nurse's office, a cafeteria, special programs for advanced learners, special programs for students with learning problems, a guidance counselor, a music program, individual tutors, and an after-school program. With only two exceptions—individual tutors and an after-school program—the public schools have superior facilities and programs. The differences for the presence of a nurse's office, a cafeteria, and special programs for students with learning problems all achieve statistical significance. The private school advantage regarding individual tutors is also statistically significant. These data suggest that if the programs available in the school are a factor affecting parental satisfaction, then individual tutors are a wise investment on the part of the school.

The lack of facilities in private schools was a common concern raised by parents. Consistent with our survey information, this mother said she had been dissatisfied with the discipline at the public school but disappointed in the facilities of her child's private school:

> [T]he public school was violent and the children were disruptive and stuff so I decided to put him into private school. The reason that I am not satisfied with the private school is because the school facilities. It is a very small school. . . .They don't have a gym, the don't have a cafeteria, they don't have a computer lab and things like that. If he is going to go to a school that I have to pay for I want him to have the best.[27]

Conversely, we found parents who were very satisfied with the programs offered by the public schools their children attend.

> They [child's public school] have special activities for the kids before and after school. They have computer labs. I truly love that school but, because we are out of boundary he will not be able to attend next year. And [child's name], he

> attends [name of a public school]. I am satisfied with that too. They have before and after programs for him especially with art. He is into art and the counselors and his art teacher and his regular teacher have recognized that and they have taken him to art museums presentations at the art museum. They do a lot with what he has interest in.[28]

Special Education

In the debate over school choice, one type of program—special education—has received a good deal of attention. Critics of school choice say that private schools ignore the needs of students with physical and mental disabilities. For example, Laura Rothstein says that "choice programs often operate in a way that is either directly or indirectly exclusionary" of those with disabilities.[29] Defenders of school choice often claim that many of those diagnosed as disabled can learn in regular classrooms and that special arrangements can be made for others. With such a large sample of parents, we are able to analyze a subset of 314 who indicated that their child has a learning disability, to determine whether private schools meet the needs of learning-disabled children. As displayed in the final row of Table 5, 73 percent of private school parents said that the school tends to the needs of their disabled child “very well,” compared to 30% of public school parents. Because of the relatively low numbers involved in this analysis, this 43-point gap does not reach statistical significance. Thus, while the numbers suggest that, at least from the parents’ perspective, private schools actually do a better job of helping disabled students learn, a more cautious interpretation is simply that they appear to do no worse.

Comments made in our focus groups reinforce the inference that many parents are very pleased with how their private school assists their learning-disabled children.

> They [name of private school] got counselors here to help the children with slow disabilities. They have groups...where they, she maybe comes in one or two times out of the week and she sit with the children who have...reading comprehension problems and stuff like that...and...get a chance to really express themselves within a group so that help them come off when they get in a group of other kids in the classroom.[30]

School and Class Size

One explanation for the high satisfaction levels of private school parents is that their children's schools are smaller than public schools. According to parents, the average size of a public school is 513 students, while the average size of the private school is 234 students (see Table 6). Likewise, parents of private school students report that the average class size is about 4 students lower than in the public schools (20, as compared to 24 students). Given the fact that private schools spend less per pupil, it is noteworthy that they can keep their classes small.

Relationships with Teachers

In focus groups, we consistently found parents who were frustrated with the poor relationships they had with teachers and administrators in public schools. For example, one parent described how the principal of her child's public school reacted when she would make inquiries about the school: "The principal would treat you as if you have no reason asking me these questions because you have no need to know."[31] Not surprisingly, then, we found a large gap between private and public school parents when they were asked whether teachers show them respect (see Table 7). Ninety percent of private school parents said that teachers "always" show them respect, while 62 percent of public school parents said the same, a 28-point difference that is statistically significant.

Students were also asked about their relationships with teachers. While there was essentially no private-public difference when youth were asked to respond to the statement "most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say," more public school students reported that they "often feel 'put down' by my teachers." This 24-point difference, however, does not reach the threshold of statistical significance.

One parent reported an experience that perhaps sheds some light on the relationship between teachers and students (and thus, by extension, parents) in public schools.

> The principal there [in her child's public school]….the teachers seem to have an attitude because of the neighborhood that the school is in. They look at the children in that way. I have had teachers say to my son when he was there… "Are you a [derogatory term]?" Just outrageous things they would say to the children and the principal never took any of this seriously. We have had meetings and I have talked to the principal about it and she said, 'I'll deal with it' but I don't expect to see the teacher anymore. Next day she is there and… It is a very nonchalant attitude. Everything is….I just don't understand what their goal is in the school. I don't get it. And I have explained to the teacher that I am a single mother raising three children by myself. I work everyday and I just can't take off and come and sit with them in school. I know my children. I know that they are not hell-raisers. They go to school. They do what they are supposed to do but if there is a complaint I never hear it from any of the teachers. They just have a 'go to hell' kind of attitude about teaching.[32]

Rules

In a finding that seems counter-intuitive, far more public than private school students "agree" or "strongly agree" that the "rules for behavior at my school are strict." The difference is no less than 78 points (93 percent versus 15 percent). Recall that earlier evidence showed that private schools are more orderly than public schools (less fighting, cheating, etc. as reported by parents and fewer disruptions in class as reported by students). This order is apparently not a function of strict behavioral rules. Perhaps strict

rules follow disorderly behavior. And perhaps private schools have a culture of behavioral expectations that doesn't encourage misbehavior in the first place.

Illuminating this finding from our surveys is an interesting anecdote from our focus groups. This participant comments that the faculty of her cousin's private school show a lot of concern for the school's students, and contrasts his experiences in a public and a private school.

> From what I see is going on with my cousin, he was getting suspended every other week at [name of public school] but now it is like the teacher talks to the Mom about him and she compliments him all the time so now he is excelling and is happy go lucky. He don't have to take any more pills. It makes a difference when instead of always talking about how bad they are they can actually point out the good points and talk to the students one-on-one and encourage the students. You can tell the difference.[33]

At least for this student, it did not seem to be the punitive enforcement of rules that improved his behavior.

Racial Integration

One concern often raised is that expanding school choice will ultimately lead to increased ethnic and racial segregation in education.[34] Recently, however, some researchers have found evidence that private schools are actually more, not less, racially integrated than public schools.[35] To examine the consequences of CSF scholarships for the racial integration of its participating students, parents were asked the approximate percentage of students in their child's school who belong to a racial or ethnic minority group. Table 8 displays the results for all CSF applicants regardless of their own race. The results show that private schools are more likely to have a student with a student body of less than 10 percent minority students; they are also less likely to have more than

90 percent minority students. In sum, when speaking of students in general, the private schools attended by CSF recipients are more—not less—racially integrated than public schools. This is likely due to the fact that unlike their public counterparts, private schools do not draw their students from circumscribed geographic areas that for all intents and purposes are racially segregated.

No private-public differences were found when students were asked whether they eat lunch with students of other races, and when they reported how many of their four best friends are of a different race.

Perhaps the most interesting analysis of racial integration is not when all students are considered together, but rather when we focus on African-American students. Table 9 provides parallel results for African-Americans only. Only 23 percent of the black parents with a child in private school were in a school that was over 90 percent minority, whereas 49 percent of black public-school parents had a child in a largely segregated school. Although the difference was quite large, it is not statistically significant. At the very least, there is little sign that the scholarship program is adding to the degree of segregation in school. On the contrary, it seems to be reducing it.

The results for the questions asked of the students support this interpretation. More black private-school students report eating lunch with students of another race than black public-school students (71 percent to 58 percent). They also report having twice as many best friends of a different race (2 of 4 friends versus 1 of 4). Though these results do not clear the bar of statistical significance, they are nonetheless suggestive.

Homework, Classwork, and Television

Both parents and students were asked about the amount and difficulty of the schoolwork students are assigned. Do private schools assign more homework than public schools? The answer is a qualified yes. Table 10 shows that more parents of private school students report that their children do at least one hour of homework each night, although the difference is not substantial (38 percent versus 33 percent) and short of reaching statistical significance. Similarly, 46 percent of private-school students say they spend at least an hour a night on homework, as compared to 32 percent of the public-school students. The private-public gap is bigger for students than parents, but it is still not statistically significant.

In our focus groups, we found many parents who reported that their child's homework load increased—both in quality and quantity—upon moving from a public to a private school. Take, for example, the words of this mother:

Mother: My kids never even had homework in the public schools.

Moderator: So [name of parent] you're saying no homework, public schools...

Mother: No, he didn't even have a concept of how to come home every day and do homework

Moderator: But now...?

Mother: He has homework every day. I look in his bag. His teacher writes notes. They have a homework book where they have to write their homework in a book. I have to sign the book every day.[36]

Another parent describes how she was unprepared for the homework assigned to her first-grader in a private school, and notes what she sees as a connection between homework and academic performance.

> Last year my son was in the first grade and...I thought it was a lot of homework that he had to do. He brought home...six pages...of homework at night and we have to do them and I thought what is this teacher doing? And then, he had to do a book report every week at first grade. I said, "First grade?" But...I was confused at the beginning, but I look at it now, it really helped him because she was constantly giving him all this homework and this year, when he give me his homework to check, he might got one, maybe two difficulties he read fast....he knew it. So it really helped him. It really helped him a lot.[37]

More public school students report that they have difficulty with their schoolwork—more say "class work is hard to learn," "I had trouble keeping up with the work," and "I would do much better if I had more help." While none of the differences meet the appropriate threshold to be considered significant statistically, the consistency of the pattern is suggestive.

The same cannot be said for the impacts of the CSF program on children's television viewing habits. We asked students how often they watch television, given the assumption that more television means less time for homework and other pursuits. No difference is observed when students are asked how much time they spend watching TV or videos or playing video games.

Parental Involvement

Past research into the performance of private schools has suggested that parental involvement is an essential component of their institutional mission and operation. School choice proponents often claim that private schools, dependent on continuing parental support for their long-term financial survival, will make greater efforts to establish close connections with parents. One parent with a unique perspective articulated what the research literature says about the difference in parental involvement between public and private schools.

> That [parental involvement] is the difference between the public school and the private school. I teach in public school. Parent involvement. In private school, they say they want you out, they are there. Public says they want you there, you might have some show up. That is half the battle. Get the parent involved, check the homework, sign this, sign that. Had parent teacher conference yesterday—one parent. The parents just aren't there.[38]

Our data provide only limited support for the claim that having one's child attend a private school leads to greater involvement of parents, although we must stress that our survey was administered after only a single year of participation in CSF. Voluntarism in particular is probably an ethic cultivated over time. Also, applicants to the CSF are already likely to be unusually involved in their children's education, given that applying for the program is itself a mark of commitment.

As displayed in Table 11, there are essentially no differences between private and public school parents when we consider the number of parent-teacher conferences they attended in the last year, their frequency of volunteering in the school, and how often they speak to other parents who have children in the same school.

In our focus groups, many private school parents expressed dissatisfaction, or at least ambivalence, about their school's expectations for volunteering and fundraising. Consider the words of this mother:

> I'm beginning to wonder about the private schools… I don't think they ask you what type of things that you want to do. They basically send letters home and say this is what we do every year…this is what you are required to do. They don't give you an option like with the activity fee that they include in your tuition…[Child's name] has only been there two years, and the first year it was like, you pay $200 at a certain time of the year and this is for some type of activity and every parent is required to pay this$200. OK, it was no problem because it was a fundraiser, but this year they took the $200 and broke it down and added it to your tuition every month.[39]

We did find one measure of home-school communication that is significantly different between private and public school parents. Private school parents report

speaking to their child's teachers more frequently on the phone during the previous year (3 versus 2 times), a difference that could only have occurred by chance one time out of ten. In support of the inference that private schools do a better job of facilitating communication between home and school, we found many parents who were upset at what they perceive as the non-responsiveness of public school faculty. Typical are the words of this mother about her son's public school:

> [H]e would fight everyday. He was coming home, "Mom, guess what? I got in a fight at lunchtime." Everyday. And I told him, "If I hear you say that one more time I am going to ground you. I don't want to hear you say that anymore. You need to stop fighting." But he never got in trouble. The principal never called me. The teacher never made contact with me. Nothing. To me, more or less, they just didn't care. They just let them do what they wanted.[40]

In contrast, another private school parent described how a regular communication channel between parents and teachers allows her to monitor her child's academic progress.

> [T]here is a lot of communication especially on a weekly basis because they bring home their folders with all their work in it and it says, like my daughter at the middle school, it says, that she got three papers that has had a 'D' or an 'F' on it. So that I can come over and say, "Hey, how come we got a 'D' on this, or why wasn't it finished or whatever.' And then the 'D,' 'F' papers the parents have to sign. So this way, you know, on a weekly basis and you have to sign their folder and send it back with them. So on a weekly basis I am getting feedback as to what they did that week, how they did on it. In the public schools I never saw that.[41]

While more private than public students report that their parents know "a lot" about their school (84 percent to 72 percent), more public school students report that they talk to their parents about school "almost every day" (67 percent of public school students compared to 61 percent of those in private schools). Neither of these differences is statistically significant, however. There is no observed difference in the number of friends each student's parents know.

Attitudes Toward Paying Tuition

Parents were asked "whether a school works better when a family pays tuition." As shown in table 12, there is no difference between private and public school parents. Apparently, most of those who applied for a scholarship felt that something was to be gained from attending a private school, even if this meant paying a portion of the fare. Whether or not they won the lottery seems to have had little effect on their opinions one year later.

Plans for Next Year

Some have wondered whether giving a family a choice of school increases the mobility rate among schools. If so, it may decrease the stability of the educational experience. But as reported in Table 13, there were no significant differences between mobility rates in private and public schools. Eighty-two percent of private-school parents reported that their child definitely will return to the same school next year, as compared to 72 percent of public-school parents. The difference is not statistically significant.

Parents whose child will probably not return to the same school were asked the reason why; two reasons stand out as particularly interesting. More public school parents reported that their children were graduating from their schools, a finding almost certainly due to the fact that middle schools are more common in the public than the private sector. Indeed, this difference probably explains most of the overall gap between private and public school return rates. However, roughly 5 percent of private school parents report that their child will not re-enroll because their child's school is too expensive, compared

to essentially no public school parents (a difference that is statistically significant). No private school students were asked to find another school, while a handful of public school students were. This difference, however, is not statistically significant.

Private-school students were less likely to be suspended than public-school students. As can be seen in Table 14, approximately 5 percent of private-school parents reported their child had been suspended, as compared to 12 percent of public-school parents. The difference is not statistically significant, however.

A common obstacle to attending private schools is often thought to be transportation difficulties. Many private schools have no buses, and rarely if ever do they have the extensive transportation system of the public schools, as noted in our focus groups by parents who were offered but declined a scholarship. In one focus group session with parents who were offered but declined a CSF scholarship, a mother commented that "A lot of private schools don't offer transportation," and then went on to describe how her work schedule precluded her from picking her daughter up from school until late in the afternoon. She told us that because she could not find a private school that provides transportation, she had to decline the scholarship. In that same session, another mother echoed her comments by noting that she could only find two schools that "was too far, no transportation. It was kind of a turn off. So I just said I would leave him [in a public school]."[42] Table 15 reports the percentage of parents who are "very satisfied" with the location of their child's school. It turns out that more private school parents express satisfaction with the location of their child's school (50 percent to 31 percent, a statistically significant difference).

This may mean that parents place more value on the neighborhood in which the school is located than the distance from home to school. Suggestive evidence for this interpretation is provided by the fact that there is no difference in the length of time it takes private and public school students to travel to school each morning. In both groups, about half get from home to school in ten minutes or less (Table 15).

Student Results

To this point, data on students have been reported only when they help elaborate information provided primarily by parents. In this section of the report, we turn our attention to questions that were asked exclusively of students. Unfortunately, because of the relatively small size of the student sample, none of the differences discussed in this section clear the bar of statistical significance. But because many of the effects are quite large and potentially important, they are reported as topics for further research.

Educational Expectations

Students tend to have high expectations as to how long they will remain in school. Most students in elementary school and junior high expect to graduate from high school and finish college. Still, if students expect to remain in school beyond college it may indicate that they expect to obtain much out of their educational experience. Table 16 displays the difference in educational expectations between private and public school students. Forty-five percent of those attending private school anticipate finishing college and pursuing their educational studies further, while only 28 percent of public-school students have the same expectations.

Peer Group Relations

Past research into school choice programs has suggested that students might have a difficult time adjusting to a private school after having attended a public school. In D.C., for example, older students reported various adjustment problems.[43] To ascertain whether this was happening nationwide, youth were asked how well the students in their school get along with each other. In addition to this question about students in general, we also asked students whether others "make fun" of them in particular. As reported in Table 17, we found no differences between private and public school students for either of these measures. In other words, we find no evidence that students who move from public to private schools suffer adverse consequences in their peer group relations.

Student Activities

Previous research has found that scholarship programs can boost students' religious service attendance. As reported in Table 18, our data also indicate that the CSF program also increased the frequency of church attendance, though the difference is only 6 percentage points (55 percent versus 49 percent). Paradoxically, private school students report a lower frequency of participation in religious youth groups. For this measure, the gap is 7 points (33 percent compared to 40 percent).

The lower participation of private school students in religious groups is mirrored for other types of activities. Private school students are less likely to be involved in both scouting (Cub Scouts, Brownies) and team sports. In both cases, the differences are

around 10 percentage points, though for neither measure does the private-public gap achieve statistical significance.

Political Tolerance and Knowledge

A major concern of critics of increased school choice involves its potential impact on civil society. Even if students learn to read, write, and calculate more effectively by means of a scholarship program, these gains will be more than offset, it is argued, by the polarization and balkanization of our society that necessarily accompany greater parental choice in education. In the words of commentator Michael Kelley, "public money is shared money, and it is to be used for the furtherance of shared values, in the interests of *e pluribus unum*. Charter schools and their like . . . take from the *pluribus* to destroy the *unum*."[44] Amy Gutmann, the Princeton political theorist, makes much the same argument, if in less colorful prose: "Public, not private, schooling is . . . the primary means by which citizens can morally educate future citizens."[45]

Given the concern that private schools serve to fragment America's sense of civic community, students were asked three questions modeled on a battery of items social scientists have long used to gauge political tolerance:

1. *Some people have views that you oppose very strongly. Do you think these people should be able to come to your school and give a speech? Yes, no, or maybe.*

2. *Should these people be allowed to live in your neighborhood? Yes, no, or maybe.*

3. *Should these people be allowed to run for president? Yes, no, or maybe.*

As reported in Table 19, there is no consistent difference between private and public school students in their levels of political tolerance. On one measure—whether people

with views you oppose should be able to live in your neighborhood—the private school students appear to display more tolerance, as 73 percent agree with the statement compared with 60 percent of public school students. When all of these questions are combined in an index, as is typical with measures like these, there is essentially no difference between private and public school students.

In addition to political tolerance, many political scientists are equally concerned with levels of political knowledge as an indicator of good citizenship. To examine whether there is a difference between private and public school students in how much they know about politics, the survey asked two questions:

> *1. Who is the Vice-President of the United States right now? Is it George Bush, Al Gore, John McCain, Bill Bradley or don't you know?*
>
> *2. Who was the president of the United States during the Civil War? Was it Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, George Washington or don't you know?*[46]

Admittedly, the second question is really a test of a student's historical knowledge. Including them both means that we can gauge two different ways of learning about politics—current events and history. These are also the only measures in the study that are cognitive in any sense.

As shown in Table 20, we find that private school students score better on both questions. While 63 percent of private school students know the name of the Vice-President, only 48 percent of public school students do. Similarly, 60 percent of students in private schools know that Abraham Lincoln was the president during the Civil War, contrasted with 26 percent of students in public schools. An additive index of the two items also shows the private school advantage in political knowledge.

In sum, these data may indicate that attending private school for one year does not result in a lower degree of political tolerance for students, and may lead to greater political knowledge.

The Selection Process

An important issue in the school-choice debate concerns the composition of those who would leave public schools if scholarships to attend private schools were made generally available. Critics of school choice have argued that choice programs would not offer low-income families a viable choice of schools. In the words of educational sociologist Amy Wells, "White and higher-SES [socioeconomic status] families will no doubt be in a position to take greater advantage of the educational market."[47] The president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Sandra Feldman, has claimed that vouchers for private schools take "money away from inner city schools so a few selected children can get vouchers to attend private schools, while the majority of equally deserving kids, who remain in the public schools, are ignored."[48] But evaluations of a New York City scholarship program, as well as the evaluation of similar programs in Cleveland and San Antonio, indicated that those who made use of a scholarship did not differ sharply from those who were offered a scholarship but did not use it.[49]

Student and Family Characteristics

The data collected in this evaluation are uniquely suited to address whether there are systematic differences between families who did and did not make use of a scholarship when one was offered to them. For this portion of the report, we limit our

analysis to families who were offered a scholarship. Table 21 thus compares two groups we label the "takers"—families who used the scholarship—and "decliners"—families who did not. Because the instrumental variable technique employed in Tables 1-20 is not necessary here, smaller differences between the two groups are statistically significant.

We find that there is no difference whatsoever in the percentage of takers and decliners whose children have learning disabilities. This is a particularly interesting finding given that we have suggestive evidence that private schools do a little better attending to the needs of children who have learning disabilities. Learning disabilities do not appear to keep kids out of private schools, and their parents seem at least as and probably more satisfied with how private schools accommodate the learning disability.

Table 21 also compares takes and decliners in terms of numerous other demographic characteristics. For consistency's sake and because past research suggests that mothers are the primary factor in a child's academic performance, all demographic questions were asked about the mother.[50] The mothers in taker families are slightly more likely to have a college degree and to attend church at least once a week, and are less likely to have a full time job outside of the home. In each case the differences are not dramatic, but they do reach statistical significance. For example, 29 percent of mothers in taker households have a college degree, compared to 22 percent in decliner households.

The average income of taker families is a little lower than decliner families, which is not surprising given that the precise amount of the scholarship offered to a family is based on a sliding income scale.

Mothers in taker households do not differ in age from decliner mothers, although they are more likely to have lived for two or more years at their current residence. There

are also racial and ethnic differences between taker and decliner mothers. More taker mothers are white, while fewer are African-American and Hispanic. Significantly more parents are Catholic, but they are no more likely to be "born-again" Christian. There are also equal percentages of two parent households across the two groups.

To summarize, there is a mixed verdict on the question of whether school choice, and CSF in particular, skims the cream of the educational crop from public schools, as is often alleged. On the one hand, the percentage of students with learning disabilities does not differ between takers and decliners. But on the other hand, the takers appear to come from more socially advantaged families than do the decliners. Mothers of takers are more likely to have a college degree. They are also more likely to have residential stability and to identify themselves racially as white. Takers are also more likely to attend church frequently and to be affiliated with the Catholic Church.

School Selection

The school selection process involves both the family and the school. Families have many different reasons for choosing a particular school for their child to attend. At the same time, the cost of tuition and the number of spaces available at different schools vary widely. Parental responses provide some insight into the way in which the two sides of this process interact to determine the school a child attends.

Some critics of school choice have expressed the concern that under a choice system parents would choose schools for other than academic reasons. They argue that low-income families are more concerned about location, sports programs, or religious instruction than about academic quality per se.[51] For example, the Carnegie Foundation

for the Advancement of Teaching has claimed that "when parents do select another school, academic concerns often are not central to the decision."[52] Similarly, an American Federation of Teachers' report on the Cleveland voucher program suggests that parents sought scholarships not because of "'failing' public schools" but "for religious reasons or because they already had a child attending the same school."[53] Disputing these contentions, supporters of school choice claim that low-income parents, like other parents, place the highest priority on the educational quality of the school.

To examine the question of how CSF affected the reasons parents chose the schools their children are attending, we change our analytical strategy slightly. Here we are interested in knowing the effect of a scholarship *offer* on the criteria parents use to choose their children's schools, whether they went private or not. Instead of a two-stage model, therefore, we use ordinary least squares regression with the scholarship offer as the only independent variable. Because of the change in analytical technique, smaller differences are statistically significant. Table 22 displays the results when parents were asked to list the most important reason for choosing their child's current school. Parents offered a scholarship were more likely to report two reasons: academic quality and religious considerations. Thirty-seven percent of parents offered a scholarship named academic quality as the primary criterion for choosing their child's school, compared to 30 percent of parents who were not offered a scholarship. This difference is statistically significant, as is the difference between the 10 percent of parents offered a scholarship who cited religion as the most important reason for selecting the school their child attends and the 4 percent of parents not offered a scholarship who gave the same response. Thus, while it is true that some parents choose the schools their children will attend on the basis

of religion, it is also true that many more cite academic concerns as their primary concern.

Not surprisingly, parents offered a scholarship were far less likely to report that location was the most important reason for choosing the school their child attends (23 percent versus 31 percent). They were also less likely to report that their child's current school was the "only choice available." The groups did not differ in the percentages who cite discipline, safety, and "other" (unspecified) reasons.

Table 23 continues the analysis begun with Table 22 by reporting the effect of a scholarship offer on admittance into a family's preferred school. We find that 72 percent of families who received an offer were able to enroll their children in the school they wanted, compared to 61 percent of families who did not receive an offer. This difference, though not as large as some might expect, is nonetheless statistically significant.

We then asked those parents whose children were not admitted into their preferred school the reason why. The most commonly cited reason was cost. Sixteen percent of "no offer" families[54] could not afford the cost of the school, compared to 13 percent of "offer" families. In other words, even though CSF scholarships only cover a maximum of 75 percent of tuition and were offered to a low-to-moderate income population, only 13 percent of families offered a scholarship were unable to afford the school of their choice.

One concern about school choice programs raised by both critics and advocates is the limited supply of openings in private schools. Our data show, however, that only 3 percent of families offered a scholarship report that their child was not admitted into their preferred school because there was "no more space available at the school." Indeed, a

greater percentage of families who did not receive an offer (6 percent) cite lack of space as a reason for non-admittance (perhaps a reflection of limited space in magnet or charter public schools).

Another concern raised by critics of school choice is that private schools will use admissions tests to screen out "undesirable" students. However, we have found that less than one percent of families offered a scholarship list an admissions test as the reason their child was not admitted into the school they prefer. The percentage is essentially the same (actually one tenth of a percentage point higher) among families who did not receive an offer. Such a slight difference is not statistically significant.

Families who did and did not receive an offer did not differ in their frequency of citing transportation problems and family mobility as reasons for non-admittance. Not surprisingly, more families who were not offered a scholarship reported that their child "had to attend the neighborhood school."

Religious Affiliation and Tuition

Our report concludes by examining the types of schools in which CSF recipients enroll, and how much they pay in tuition. As reported in Table 24, over half are in Catholic schools, with another 20 percent in non-denominational Christian schools, 7 percent in Baptist schools, 3 percent in Lutheran schools, and 1 percent in Jewish schools. All in all, only 8 percent of CSF students enrolled in non-religious private schools (another 9 percent are in schools classified as "other").

Table 25 displays the range of tuition paid by CSF recipients (this is over and above the scholarship they received). The modal category is $1,000 to $2,000, the

amount paid by 40 percent of scholarship recipients. Twenty-six percent paid between $500 and $1,000, while twenty-five percent paid between $2,000 and $4,000. Only 6 percent paid over $4,000 and 3 percent under $500.

Conclusion

This evaluation is the first of a large-scale national scholarship program enabling low-income parents to send their children to the private school of their choice. Because scholarships were awarded by lottery, PEPG was able to employ the methodology of a randomized field trial. Unlike observational studies, therefore, we are able to attribute any observed differences between the public and private school populations to the effect of switching from the former to the latter. The same methodology has been used to evaluate scholarship programs in individual cities. Questionnaires administered for those evaluations are substantively similar to the one used in this study. However, because those studies were conducted in only three potentially unrepresentative cities, questions have lingered about whether their results can be generalized to the nation as a whole.

It appears that they can. Our telephone survey administered to a probability sample drawn from a master list of CSF applicants has produced results that parallel those from studies conducted in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio. Parents of children in private schools are very satisfied with their new schools, both generally and in regards to specific aspects of a child's educational environment—academic rigor, discipline, safety, and the values taught by the school. They are also less likely to encounter problems like cheating, stealing, fighting, and gangs in their child's school. Both the sizes of the school and the average class are smaller, and teachers are

more likely to show parents respect. Students in private schools report far fewer disruptions caused by other students. On the other hand, private schools lack the facilities and programs of most public schools (with the notable exception of individual tutors for students, a resource private schools are more likely to have). And while, by some demographic measures, families using CSF scholarships are advantaged over those who choose not to use them, there is no evidence that private schools are turning away "problem" students.

In sum, we can conclude that the Children's Scholarship Fund has had a measurably positive effect on the educational experiences of its recipients. Parents who have exercised choice over their children's schools report high levels of satisfaction with the schools they have chosen. And based on test score data collected in previous evaluations, it is plausible to speculate that the educational improvements cited by CSF parents will lead to improved academic performance—and thus improved prospects for the future success—of their children.

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[1] The School Choice Scholarships Foundation (SCSF) program was established in New York City prior to the establishment of the CSF program, but, working with SCSF, CSF provided financial support facilitating its second-year evaluation. Currently, CSF has administrative responsibility for the New York scholarship program. The Washington Scholarship Fund and Parents Advancing Choice in Education in Dayton were also in operation prior to the establishment of the CSF program, but CSF has played a major role in sustaining their operations.

For results regarding the impact of the scholarship programs on student test scores across all three cities, see William G. Howell, Patrick J. Wolf, Paul E. Peterson, and

David E. Campbell, “Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D. C.: Evidence from Randomized Field Trials,” Paper prepared for the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D. C., September 2000.

For reports from the evaluation of the SCSF program in New York City, see Paul E. Peterson, David E. Myers, Josh Haimson, and William B. Howell, "Initial Findings from the Evaluation of the New York School Choice Scholarships Program," Program on Education Policy and Governance, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, November, 1997; Paul E. Peterson, David Myers, and William G. Howell, "An Evaluation of the New York City School Choice Scholarships Program: The First Year," PEPG Report Number 98-12, October 1998; Paul E. Peterson, David E. Myers, William G. Howell, and Daniel P. Mayer, "The Effects of School Choice in New York City," in Susan B. Mayer and Paul E. Peterson, eds., *Earning and Learning: How Schools Matter* (Brookings, 1999), pp. 317-340; Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell, eds., *Charters, Vouchers, and Public Education* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2001); David Myers, Paul E. Peterson, Daniel Mayer, Julia Chou, and William P. Howell, “School Choice in New York City after Two Years: An Evaluation of the School Choice Scholarships Program,” PEPG Occasional Paper, September 2000; and Paul E. Peterson and William G. Howell, "Exploring Explanations for Ethnic Differences in Voucher Impacts on Student Test Scores," in Tom Loveless and John E. Chubb, *Ending the Test-Score Gap* (Brookings, forthcoming).

For additional reports from the evaluation of the WSF program in Washington, D. C., see Paul E. Peterson, Jay P. Greene, William G. Howell, and William McCready,

"Initial Findings from an Evaluation of School Choice Programs in Washington, D. C. and Dayton, Ohio," PEPG Occasional Paper, October 24, 1998; and Patrick Wolf, William G. Howell and Paul E. Peterson, " School Choice in Washington, DC: An Evaluation after One Year," Paper prepared for the Conference on Charters, Vouchers and Public Education, sponsored by PEPG, March 2000.

For additional reports from the evaluation of Dayton, see William G. Howell and Paul E. Peterson, "School Choice in Dayton, Ohio: An Evaluation After One Year," Paper prepared for the Conference on Charters, Vouchers and Public Education, sponsored by PEPG, March 2000; and Paul E. Peterson, David Campbell and Martin West, "An Evaluation of the Dayton Voucher Program after Two Years" PEPG Occasional Paper, May 2000.

All PEPG Occassional Papers and Reports cited above are available at http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/index.htm.

[2] This is because the enormous expense involved in testing thousands of students in scores of communities twice (once at the beginning of the school year, once at the end).

[3] Howell, Wolf, Peterson, and Campbell, “Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers.”

[4] Jay P. Greene, “School Choice in Charlotte,” *Education Matters*, Summer (volume 1, number 2) 2001.

[5] Christopher Jencks and Meridith Phillips, eds., *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings, 1999).

[6] Alan Krueger, “Experimental Estimates of Education Production Functions.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114 (1999), 497-533.

[7] However, the CSF program was not advertised equally in all parts of the country, scholarships were not available in proportionate numbers everywhere, and application rates were not uniform from all parts of the United States.

[8] No baseline data were collected for the national evaluation of CSF; however, baseline data were collected in the evaluations of the New York, D. C. and Dayton programs, and very few differences in baseline characteristics were statistically significant.

[9] The sampling procedure ensured that samples of test and control groups were similar for geographic areas and that both were proportional to the scholarship offer rate among geographic areas.

[10] In accordance with the recommendations of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, we have calculated an adjusted response rate. See The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2000. *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: AAPOR. (This document is also available at http://www.aapor.org.)

As detailed in *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*, this response rate uses as its denominator an estimate of the percentage of eligible cases among the unknown cases. We generated that estimate by assuming that the percentage of ineligible households among those we interviewed is the same as the percentage among those we did not interview (43%).

Overall:	45.6%
Treatment:	45.0
Control:	47.0%

Note: in the AAPOR definitions, this is Response Rate 4 (RR4)

For more information about the cooperation and contact rates, feel free to contact PEPG.

[11] For a few demographic measures, there are slight differences between the treatment and control groups that reach or approach statistical significance. These are education level, race, and religious affiliation (% Catholic). Because the response rates for the treatment and control groups are very similar, it is unlikely that these differences are due to anything more than chance (recall that only chance determines if a family receives a scholarship). To account for these slight differences, we have employed standard post-stratification weighting. We are able to construct weights so that the demographic composition of the treatment and control groups match. An example best illustrates our method.

> 41.7% of the treatment group report that the mother in the household has had "some college," compared to 45.3% of the control group. We thus simply calculate 45.3/41.7 to generate the weight for this variable. We continue this procedure for race and religious affiliation as well, and generate a final weight by multiplying them all together.

Note that use of these weights make no substantive difference for the estimates we generate. See the Appendix for a table with all of the demographic comparisons between the treatment and control groups.

[12] Note that when we run our two-stage model with a host of standard control variables—mother's education, mother's age, length of residence, whether the mother is employed fulltime, whether the mother was born in the United States, mother's race, mother's marital status, Catholic religious affiliation, whether the mother is a "born-again" Christian, frequency of religious service attendance, and family income—the results are essentially unchanged.

[13] See Joshua D. Angrist, Guido W. Imbens, and Donald B. Rubin, "Identification of Causal Effects using Instrumental Variables," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 91 (1996), 444-462 for a discussion of the technique. See Krueger, "Experimental Estimates" for an application to an educational intervention.

[14] While in most cases parents brought children to the testing sessions, occasionally other family members or friends would instead.

[15] Jay Greene, "The Hidden Research Consensus Supporting School Choice" in Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell, *Charters, Vouchers, and Public Education* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2001).

[16] A summary of findings from earlier studies is available in Paul E. Peterson, "School Choice: A Report Card," in Peterson and Hassel, *Learning from School Choice* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1998), p. 18. Mark Schneider, Paul Teske, Melissa Marschall, and Christine Roch, "Tiebout, School Choice, Allocative and Productive Efficiency," paper prepared for annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, 1998, find higher levels of parental satisfaction within New York City public schools, when parents are given a choice of school.

[17] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 15, 2000.

[18] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., March 25, 2000.

[19] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, March 18, 2000.

[20] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, March 18, 2000.

[21] To adjust for possible question-ordering effects, this list was randomized for each interview, a practice followed for each similar list in the survey.

[22] At this point, the reader is reminded that these figures are generated from the two-stage estimates described above; the estimate may not mean that fighting is never a serious problem in a private school, but it does indicate large differences in the prevalence of fighting in public and private schools.

[23] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 1, 2000.

[24] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 1, 2000. Also, note that this parent refers to a child in kindergarten. CSF scholarships could be used for kindergarten tuition, but our telephone survey only included parents of children in grades 1 through 8.

[25] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1999), table 62, table 170. Since the tuition figures are from 1993-94, that is the year chosen for the public school expenditures as well (in 1998-99 dollars).

[26] Digest of Education Statistics, 1999, table 74.

[27] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 15, 2000.

[28] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2000.

[29] Laura F. Rothstein, "School Choice and Students with Disabilities," in Stephen D. Sugarman and Frank R. Kemerer, eds., *School Choice and Social Controversy*, (Washington, D. C.: Brookings, 1999), p. 357.

[30] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2000.

[31] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2000.

[32] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 1, 2000.

[33] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, March 18, 2000.

[34] Michael Kelly, "Dangerous Minds," *New Republic*, December 20, 1996.

[35] Jay P. Greene and Nicole Mellow, "Integration Where it Counts," *Texas Education Review*, Volume 1, Number 1, Spring 2000; Michael Heise and Thomas Nechyba, "School Finance Reform: A Case for Vouchers," Center for Civic Innovation, The Manhattan Institute for Public Policy Research, Civic Report, Number 9, October, 1999; Howard Fuller and George Mitchell, "The Impact of School Choice on Racial and Ethnic Enrollment in Milwaukee Private Schools," Marquette University, Current Education Issues, Number 99-5, December 1999. See also Howard Fuller and George Mitchell, The Impact of School Choice on Integration in Milwaukee Private Schools," Marquette University, Current Education Issues, Number 2000-2, June 2000.

[36] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2000.

[37] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2000

[38] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, April 1, 2000.

[39] Focus group session, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2000.

[40] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, April 1, 2000.

[41] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, April 1, 2000.

[42] Focus group session, Dayton, Ohio, March 18, 2000.

[43] Patrick Wolf,. William G. Howell and Paul E. Peterson, " School Choice in Washington, DC: An Evaluation after One Year."

[44] Michael Kelly, "Dangerous Minds," *New Republic,* December 20, 1996.

[45] Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 70.

[46] The order of the response options in both questions was randomized.

[47] Amy Stuart Wells, "African-American Students' View of School Choice," in Bruce Fuller, Richard F. Elmore, and Gary Orfield, eds., *Who Chooses? Who Loses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), p. 47.

[48] Sandra Feldman, "Let's Tell the Truth," *New York Times*, November 2, 1997, p. 7 (Advertisement).

[49] Paul E. Peterson, David Myers, Josh Haimson, and William G. Howell, "Initial Findings from the Evaluation of the New York School Choice Scholarships Program," Occasional Paper, Harvard University, Program on Education Policy and Governance, November 1997; Jay P. Greene, William G. Howell, and Paul E. Peterson, "Lessons from the Cleveland Scholarship Program," in Paul E. Peterson and Bryan C. Hassel., eds., *Learning from School Choice* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings,1998), pp. 357-94; Paul E. Peterson, David Myers and William G. Howell, "An Evaluation of the Horizon Scholarship Program in the Edgewood Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas: The First Year," Occasional Paper, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, October, 1999.

[50] More specifically, the questions were asked about the mother or female guardian. Only in those few cases where there was no female guardian did the questions pertain to the father or male guardian.

[51] Dan Murphy, F. Howard Nelson and Bella Rosenberg, "The Cleveland Voucher Program: Who Chooses? Who Gets Chosen? Who Pays?" (New York: American Federation of Teachers, 1997), p. 10.

[52] Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *School Choice: A Special Report* Princeton, New Jersey: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1992), p. 13.

[53] Nicholas Lemann, "A False Panacea," *Atlantic* (January 1991), p. 104, as quoted in Abigail Thernstrom, *School Choice in Massachusetts* (Boston: Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 1991), p. 40.

[54] That is, 16% of all families who were not offered a scholarship, not of just those families whose child was not admitted into the school they preferred.

Table 1-- The Overall Impact in Three Cities of Switching to a Private School on Test Score Performances

	Year 1 (Percentiles)	Year 2 (Percentiles)
African Americans		
Overall	3.3	6.3**
Math	5.5*	6.2*
Reading	1.3	6.3**
All Other Ethnic Groups		
Overall	0.2	-1.0
Math	-0.2	-1.2
Reading	0.4	-0.8

* = difference significant at $p < 0.1$, ** = significant at $p < 0.05$; two-tailed test.

Figures represent the average impact of switching to a private school on test scores in New York, Dayton, and D.C.. Averages are based upon effects observed in the three cities weighted by the inverse of the standard errors of the point estimates. For African Americans, the unweighted average effects after one year are 2.7 overall, 4.8 in math, and 0.6 in reading; after two years, the unweighted average effect sizes are 6.6 overall, 6.5 in math, and 6.8 in reading.

Table 2 – Parent and Student Grades for School

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Parents who gave school an "A"	71.5%	16.2%	55.3***
Average grade parents give their school[a]	A- (3.8)	C+ (2.5)	1.3***
(N)			2365
Students who gave school an "A"	51.6%	37.9%	13.7
Average grade students give their school	B (3.2)	B (3.1)	0.1
Students who "like school a lot"	27.5%	43.2%	-15.7
(N)			868-871

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a] Average grade calculated using a standard GPA scale (A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0, F=0).

Table 3 – Satisfaction with School

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
"Very satisfied" with:			
Academic Quality	67.7%	23.4%	44.3***
Safety	70.5	19.9	50.6***
Discipline	57.5	21.5	36.0***
Teaching Values	68.9	24.5	44.4***
Parents who feel "very proud" of child's school	69.5%	24.5%	45.0***
(N)			2354-2366
Students who strongly agree "students are proud" to attend their school	55.0%	34.6%	19.4
(N)			857

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 4 – School Discipline

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Parents rating the following problem as "somewhat" or "very serious":			
Fighting	0%	47.3%	-47.3***
Cheating	0	23.8	-23.8***
Stealing	1.3	33.1	-31.8***
Gangs	2.8	15.4	-12.6*
Racial Conflict	2.7	21.7	-19.0**
Guns	0	13.7	-13.7**
Drugs	5.4	14.8	-9.4
(N)			2086-2325
Students who "strongly agree" with the following statements about their school:			
"Other students often disrupt class."	7.8%	56.8%	-49.0**
"Some teachers ignore cheating when they see it."	16.8	7.1	9.7
"I do not feel safe at school"	0	17.3	-17.3
Average number of student's four best friends who "get in trouble with their teachers"	1.00	1.04	0.04
(N)			859-865

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 5 – School Facilities and Programs

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Percents reporting the following resources at their child's school:			
Nurse's Office	66.1%	88.9%	-22.8***
Cafeteria	79.0	93.1	-14.1**
Special programs for advanced learners	58.7	70.9	-12.2
Special programs for students with learning problems	57.9	87.6	-29.7***
Guidance counselor	58.7	70.9	-12.2
Music program	83.2	85.7	-2.5
Individual tutors	78.4	48.6	29.8***
After-school program	84.4	71.5	12.9
(N)			1991-2352
Of parents of students with learning disabilities: Child's school attends to his/her particular learning needs "very well"	73.0%	30.1%	42.9
(N)			314

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 6 – Size of School and Class

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Average size of school (as reported by parents) [a]	234	513	-279***
Average class size (as reported by parents) [b]	19.5	23.6	-4.1***
(N)			1949

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a] Average size of school estimated with each category coded at its midpoint. Responses in the largest category (over 600) were assigned a value of 675.
[b] Average class size estimated with each category coded at its midpoint. Responses in the highest category (over 40) were assigned a value of 43.

Table 7 – Relationships with Teachers

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Parents reporting teachers "always" show them respect	90.0%	61.7%	28.3***
(N)			2330
Students who "agree" or "strongly agree" with the following statements:			
"Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say."	79.8%	85.8%	-6.0
"In class, I often feel 'put down' by my teachers."	3.3	27.6	-24.3
"Rules for behavior at my school are strict."	14.6	93.0	-78.4***
(N)			859-865

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 8 – Ethnic Integration
(All Respondents)

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students attending schools with the following percentage of minorities (as reported by parents):			
Under 10%	44.2%	23.1%	21.1**
10% to 50%	27.4	17.6	9.8
50% to 90%	14.1	25.6	-11.5
Over 90%	14.5	33.8	-19.3*
Total	100.0%	100.0%	
(N)			2268
Students who report eating lunch with students of other races "all of the time" or "most of the time"	60.7%	58.2%	2.5
Average number of four best friends who are of a different race (as reported by students)	1.15	1.26	.11
(N)			822-859

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 9 – Ethnic Integration (African-Americans Only)

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students attending schools with the following percentage of minorities (as reported by parents):			
Under 10%	18.5%	16.6%	1.9
10% to 50%	22.9	14.0	8.9
50% to 90%	35.3	20.1	15.2
Over 90%	23.3	49.3	-26.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	
(N)			1112
Students who report eating lunch with students of other races "all of the time" or "most of the time"	71.0%	57.7%	13.3
Average number of four best friends who are of a different race (as reported by students)	2.14	.94	1.20
(N)			419-429

* = difference significant at $p < 0.1$, ** = significant at $p < 0.05$, *** = significant at $p < 0.01$; two-tailed test.

Table 10 – Homework, Classwork, and Television

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Parents reporting child does "one to two hours" or more of homework each night:	38.6%	32.9%	5.7
(N)			2345
Students reporting they do "one to two hours" or more of homework each night	45.9%	32.2%	13.7
Students who agree with the following statements about their work:			
"Class work is hard to learn"	5.8%	16.1%	10.3
"I had trouble keeping up with the work"	19.0	40.8	21.8
"I would do much better if I had more help"	40.4	52.0	-11.6
Average hours each day spent watching TV or videos or playing video games[a]	2.4	2.5	-0.1
(N)			863-868

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a]Estimated with each category coded at its midpoint. Responses in the highest category (over 5) were assigned a value of 5.5.

Table 11 – Parental Involvement

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Number of parent-teacher conferences attended in last year	2.7	3.2	-.5
Volunteered at least one hour in the child's school in the past month	49.1%	46.7%	2.4
Talks with other parents of children in the same school "often" or "very often"	67.7%	67.5%	0.2
Number of times spoken with teacher on phone in the last year	3.2	2.4	0.8*
(N)			2352-2354
Students reporting that:			
Their parents "know a lot" about their school	83.8%	71.8%	12.0
They talk to their parents about school "almost every day"	60.9	66.8	-5.9
Average number of student's four best friends his or her parent knows	2.9	3.0	0.1
(N)			860-865

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 12 – Does Paying Tuition Make A School Work Better?

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
"School works better when a family pays tuition"[a]	73.2%	74.4%	-1.2
(N)			1607

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a] The other choice was "a school works better when all the costs are paid for by taxes." Note that 28% of respondents reported that they did not know the answer to this question.

Table 13 – Returning to Same School Next Year

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students who definitely will return to the same school next year[a]	81.9%	72.4%	9.5
Reasons for not returning:			
"Graduating"	3.0	16.4	-13.4*
"Quality of school is not acceptable"	4.1	5.0	-0.9
"School is too expensive"	4.9	0.7	4.2**
"Child asked not to return"	0	1.1	-1.1
"Some other reason"	8.0	5.9	2.1
(N)			2209

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a] Columns do not sum to 100% because of statistical adjustment.

Table 14 – Suspension Rates

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students suspended (as reported by parents)	5.1%	11.6%	-6.5
(N)			2358

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 15 – School Location

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Parents "very satisfied" with the location of their child's school	49.5%	31.2%	18.3*
Students who get from home to school each morning in ten minutes or less (as reported by parents)	49.7%	51.4%	-1.7
(N)			2340-2356

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 16 – Educational Expectations

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private (1)	**Public (2)**	**Impact (3)**
Students who expect to continue education past college	44.5%	28.1%	16.4
(N)			846

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 17 – Peer Group Relations

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students who "agree" or "strongly agree" that in their school:			
"Students get along well with others"	59.0%	62.9%	-3.9
"Other students make fun of me"	24.1	25.8	-1.7
(N)			871

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 18 – Student Activities

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students who report doing the following activities "a lot":			
"Attend church or religious services outside of school"	54.7%	48.7%	6.0
"Participate in church or religious youth groups"	32.7	39.9	-7.2
"Participate in scouting (Cub Scouts, Brownies)"	4.3	14.7	-10.4
"Play team sports (like Little League)"	34.2	45.2	11.0
(N)			867

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 19 – Political Tolerance

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students who think those with opposing views should be allowed to:			
"Come to your school and give a speech"	50.1%	49.1%	1.0
"Live in your neighborhood"	73.1	60.2	12.9
"Run for president"	49.0	45.4	3.6
Index of Political Tolerance[a]	1.8	1.6	0.2
(N)			861

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05,
*** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a]The index represents the additive score of the three tolerance items.

Table 20 – Political Knowledge

	Effect of Going Private		
	Private	**Public**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Students answering correctly			
Name of Vice President	63.2%	48.4%	14.8
Name of President during Civil War	59.5	25.9	33.6
Index of Political Knowledge[a]	0.93	0.74	0.19
(N)			871

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

[a]The index represents the additive score of the two knowledge items.

Table 21 - Demographic Characteristics

	Takers	Decliners	Difference
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Students with learning disabilities	13.4%	13.4%	0
Mothers who:			
Have a college degree	29.4%	22.4%	7.0***
Attend church at least once a week	74.2%	64.4%	9.8***
Work full time	50.3%	59.6%	-9.3***
Average household income	$30,700	$33,000	-2,300**
Mother's age	36.8	37.2	-0.4
Mother lived at current residence two years or more	85.3%	79.4%	6.9***
Mother's Ethnicity:			
Percent White	30.1%	24.8%	5.3***
Percent African-American	38.0%	51.9%	-13.9***
Percent Hispanic	13.5%	17.4%	-3.9*
Two parent households	53.7%	51.8%	1.9
Mother's Religious Affiliation:			
Catholic	31.3%	24.1%	7.2***
"Born Again" Christian	38.2%	40.5%	-2.3
(N)	435-464	1035-1116	

* = difference significant at $p < 0.1$, ** = significant at $p < 0.05$, *** = significant at $p < 0.01$; two-tailed test.

Table 22 – School Selection

	Effect of Scholarship Offer		
	Offer	**No Offer**	**Impact**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Single most important reason why parent chose school:			
Academic quality	36.5%	30.4%	6.1***
Location	23.1	30.5	-7.5***
Only choice	18.9	24.2	-5.3***
Religion	9.5	3.8	5.7***
Discipline	3.0	2.8	0.2
Safety	3.3	3.3	0
Other	5.7	5.0	0.7
Total	100.0%	100.0%	
(N)	1574	786	

* = difference significant at $p < 0.1$, ** = significant at $p < 0.05$,
*** = significant at $p < 0.01$; two-tailed test.

Table 23 – Attending a Preferred School

	Effect of Scholarship Offer		
	Offer	**No Offer**	**Offer**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**
Gained admission to their preferred school	71.7%	60.8	10.9***
Reasons why child did not gain admission to preferred school :			
Could not afford the cost of school	12.5	16.3	-3.8***
Admissions test	0.7	0.8	-0.1
No more space available at the school	3.2	5.7	-2.5***
Had to attend neighborhood school	3.8	6.5	-2.7***
Transportation problems	2.1	2.6	-0.5
Family moved away from school	0.6	0.8	-0.2
Other reason	5.3	6.4	-1.1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	
(N)	1554-1557	769-772	

* = difference significant at p < 0.1, ** = significant at p < 0.05, *** = significant at p < 0.01; two-tailed test.

Table 24 – Religious Affiliation of Recipients' Schools

	Takers
	(1)
Catholic	52.8%
Christian (non-denominational)	19.9
Non-religious	7.9
Baptist	6.5
Lutheran	3.2
Jewish	0.9
"Other"	8.8
Total	100.0%
(N)	432

Table 25—Tuition Paid[a]

	Takers
	(1)
Less than $500	3.2%
$500 to less than $1,000	25.5
$ 1,000 to less than $2,000	39.8
$2,000 to less than $4,000	25.2
$4,000 or more	6.3
Total	100.0%
(N)	412

[a] The precise wording of the question is "How much each year does your family pay for your child's school? Less than $500; $500 to less than $1,000; $1,000 to less than $2,000; $2,000 to less than $4,000; or $4,000 or more?"

Appendix

Table A: Demographic Comparisons Between Treatment and Control Groups

	Control	Treatment
	(1)	(2)
College degree (%)	21.7	24.4
Some college (%)	45.3	41.7*
Age	37.1	37.1
Lived in current residence 2 or more years	80.7	81.1
Two parent household	52.4	52.3
Work full time (%)	57.6	56.9
Born in USA (%)	82.0	82.5
White (%)	24.8	30.1***
Black (%)	51.6	47.9*
Hispanic (%)	17.2	16.3
Married (%)	54.2	54.9
Catholic (%)	23.4	26.2
Born again (%)	39.7	39.8
Attend church once a week or more (%)	64.9	67.3
Household Income	31,900	32,400
(N)	728-788	1470-1580

* = difference significant at $p < 0.1$, ** = significant at $p < 0.05$,
*** = significant at $p < 0.01$; two-tailed test.

Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D. C.: Evidence from Randomized Field Trials

by

William G. Howell
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin

Patrick J. Wolf
Assistant Professor, Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University
Guest Scholar, The Brookings Institution

Paul E. Peterson
Director, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University
Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University

and

David E. Campbell
Research Associate, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University

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The Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) is located within the Taubman Center on State and Local Government, John F. Kennedy School of Government and within the Center for American Political Studies, Department of Government, Harvard University. Mailing address: Taubman 306, Kennedy School of Government, 79 J. F. Kennedy St., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138 Phone: 617-495-7976/495-8312; Fax: 617-496-4428;
Website: http://data.fas.harvard.edu/pepg/

Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D. C.: Evidence from Randomized Field Trials

(Executive Summary)

In the late 1990s, three privately-funded school voucher programs for students from low-income families were established in the Dayton, Ohio metropolitan area, New York City, and Washington, D. C. The New York City program, sponsored by the School Choice Scholarships Foundation (SCSF), was announced in the fall of 1996; students receiving vouchers entered private schools in the fall of 1997. Two additional programs were created one year later, one in the Dayton metropolitan area, sponsored by Parents Advancing Choice in Education (PACE), and one in D. C., sponsored by the Washington Scholarship Fund (WSF). WSF expanded a previously established program, originally created in 1993. In 1999, the Children's Scholarship Fund, a nationwide school-choice scholarship program, provided additional support to these programs.

The main findings from two-year evaluations of the three programs are as follows:

- In the three cities taken together, the average, overall test-score performance of African American students who switched from public to private schools was, after one year, 3.3 NPR points higher, and, after two years, 6.3 NPR points higher than the performance of the control group remaining in public schools. In each city, the difference after two years was statistically significant.

- No statistically significant effects, either positive or negative, were observed for students from other ethnic groups who switched from public to private schools.

- A difference of 6.3 NPR points in overall test performance is 0.33 standard deviations, generally thought to be a moderately large effect. Nationwide, differences between black and white test scores are, on average, approximately one standard deviation. The school voucher intervention, after two years, erases, on average, about one-third of that difference. If the trend line observed over the first two years continues in subsequent years, the black-white test gap could be eliminated in subsequent years of education for black students who use a voucher to switch from public to private school. But it remains to be seen whether the gains black students experienced after two years continue to increase over time.

- By comparison, the effect of two years of participation by African Americans in a class- size reduction randomized field trial in Tennessee, which reduced class size by seven students, was to improve test scores by 4.9 NPR points, or approximately 0.21 standard deviations. As another point of comparison, the RAND study of *Improving School Achievement* reports what are said to be "remarkable" one-year gains in some states that have rigorous statewide testing programs (e. g., Texas and North Carolina) that are "as much as 0.06 to 0.07 standard deviation[s] per year," or 0.12 to 0.14

standard deviations over two years. The effects of vouchers after two years, as observed here, are over twice as large.

- These results are from randomized field trials. Students' initial abilities and family background generally do not influence the results, because students were randomly assigned to test and control groups. Furthermore, all results take into account initial ability levels.

    - 42 percent of the students participating in the second year of the evaluation in New York City were African Americans. The percentages in Dayton and D. C. were 74 percent and 94 percent, respectively. Hispanic students participating in the second year of the evaluation constituted 51 percent of the total in New York City, 2 percent in Dayton, and 4 percent in Washington, D. C. Finally, 5 percent of the students participating in the evaluation in New York City were white. The percentages of whites in Dayton and D. C. were 24 percent and 1 percent, respectively. The remaining students came from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds.

- Results for African Americans did not vary significantly by subject matter. Average differences, as observed in the three cities together, between those attending private schools and the control group in public school were 6.2 NPR points in math, and 6.3 percentile points in reading.

- Results varied somewhat by city. Overall test score performance after two years by African American students switching to a private school, as compared to the control group, was, on average, 4.3 NPR points higher in New York City, 6.5 points higher in Dayton, Ohio, and 9.0 points higher in Washington, D. C.

    - In D. C., older students switching to private schools had trouble adapting to their school in the first year, but recovered lost ground and gained substantially by the end of the second year. After one year, older African American students attending private schools trailed their public school peers in overall test performance by 9.0 points. But by the end of two years, this older group of African American students had combined test score performances that were 8.1 percentile points higher than those of the control group.

The vouchers could be used to attend any private school within the metropolitan area that the family chose. In Dayton, the vouchers could also be used to attend a public school outside the school district, but the few students who made this choice were excluded from the evaluation.

Over 20,000 students filled out initial applications for school vouchers in New York City, over 7,500 applied in Washington, D. C., and over 3,000 applied in Dayton, Ohio. Because the demand exceeded the supply of vouchers available, vouchers in all three cities were awarded by lotteries that gave each family an equal chance of winning a voucher.

The voucher programs offered lottery winners annual scholarships of up to $1,700 to help pay tuition at a private elementary school for at least four years. Telephone applications were received in the fall and winter of the year prior to the first year of the voucher program. In response to invitations sent by the program operators, applicants attended verification sessions where eligibility was determined, students were given baseline tests, older students filled out short questionnaires, and adult family members completed longer questionnaires. The lotteries were held in April or May prior to the beginning of the next school year. The data reported in this paper are taken from student performances on tests administered at follow-up sessions one and two years after the beginning of the program.

Since scholarships were awarded by means of a lottery in each city, the evaluations of these three programs were all designed as randomized field trials, a research method characteristically used in medical research to determine the effectiveness of drugs or other interventions. When an evaluation takes the form of a randomized field trial, the group receiving the offer of a school voucher is, on average, essentially identical to the control group with which it is compared, the only difference between the two groups being the luck of the lottery draw. Any differences observed during the randomized field trial, therefore, may be attributed to the school the child attended, not to the child's initial ability and family background characteristics, which generally do not differ between the two groups.

Students included in the evaluation were entering grades 2-5 in New York City and grades 2-8 in Washington D. C. and Dayton. Only those students who had previously been attending public school were included in the evaluation. Students were tested on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Each student was given a National Percentile Ranking (NPR) score in math and reading which may vary between 0 and 100. Nationwide, median student performance is 50. Results are reported for math, reading, and a combined score that is the average of the math and reading scores.

At this time the evaluation team is unable to explain why school vouchers have positive effects on African American students but no detectable effects on others. However, the evaluation team plans to explore this question by detailed examination of parental and student reports on school life collected at the time students were tested.

The evaluation of the voucher programs in the three cities is an activity of the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG), which is jointly sponsored by the Taubman Center on State and Local Government, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and the Center for American Political Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. Paul E. Peterson, Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government and Director of PEPG at Harvard University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, is the director of the evaluations of the Dayton and Washington, D. C. programs. William Howell is Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin. Patrick Wolf is Assistant Professor, Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University and Guest Scholar, The

Brookings Institution. David Campbell is a PEPG research associate. The evaluation of the SCSF program in New York City is a collaborative effort jointly conducted by Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) and PEPG, Paul E. Peterson and David Myers, Senior Fellow, MPR, serving as co-principal investigators.

These evaluations have been supported by grants from the following foundations: Achelis Foundation, Bodman Foundation, Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, William Donner Foundation, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, John M. Olin Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Smith-Richardson Foundation, Spencer Foundation, and Walton Family Foundation. Findings and interpretation are those of the authors of the study and not necessarily those of either the sponsoring foundations or program operators.

Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore
Academic Performance of Scholarship Recipients in the 2005 – 2006 School Year

Catherine Carey
Practical Research
March 2007

Practical Research
3030 Chesterfield Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21213
443-320-0570
www.practical-research.com
Catherine@practical-research.com

For document requests please contact:
410-243-2510 or pelliscsfb@msn.com

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Contents

Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore assessed the academic performance of students who received scholarships during the 2005 – 2006 school year. Language arts, math, science and social studies grades from report cards issued at the end of the school year were used. Academic performance for scholarship recipients in grades three through eight was assessed.

Based on the results of research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education the academic performance for scholarship recipients in kindergarten through second grade was not assessed. This research suggested that children came to kindergarten with a variety of skill levels. In addition, this research suggested that children in the early academic grades, kindergarten through second grade, gained skills at different rates.

In 2003 the first wave of scholarship recipients entered high school and became Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore alumni. Between 2003 and 2006 one hundred twenty-six alumni entered high school. Report cards were returned for less than half the alumni. As a result, their academic performance was not assessed.

Scholarship recipients were placed in three academic performance groups based on their grades.

- **Excellent** includes A grades and grades between 90 and 100.
- **Prepared** includes B and C grades and grades between 70 and 89.
- **Needs Improvement** includes D and F grades and grades between 0 and 69.

Grades for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Calvary Lutheran and several schools with a small number of scholarship recipients were recoded. B+ grades were changed to A and C+ grades were changed to B. These changes were made because three out of four numerical grades in the range were in the category used by the Children's Scholarship Fund.

Results of the Research

- One-third of the students earned "Excellent" math grades.
- Two out of five students earned "Excellent" grades in language arts, science and social studies.
- Three out of five students earned "Prepared" grades in math.
- Half the students earned "Prepared" grades in language arts, science and social studies.
- Less than one in ten students earned "Needs Improvement" grades in all the academic disciplines.

Language Arts

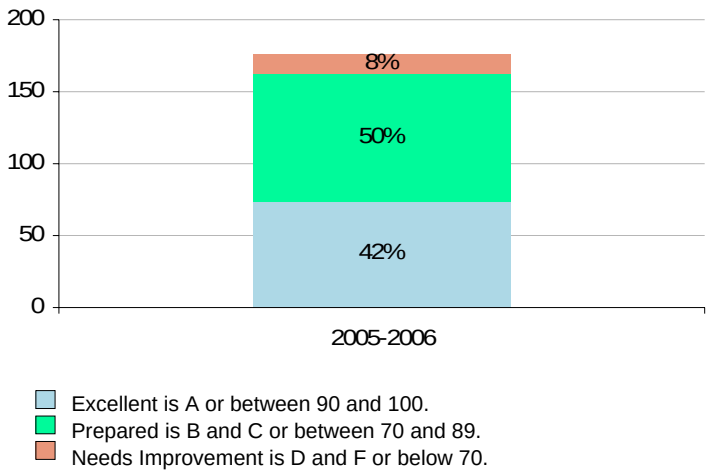

Figure 1: Language Arts Performance
Current Students Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore

Report cards were obtained for 171 scholarship recipients.

- About two out of five students (42%) earned "Excellent" grades.
- Half of the students (50%) were "Prepared".
- Less than 1 in 10 (8%) of the students earned "Needs Improvement" grades.

Math

- About one-third of the students (34%) earned "Excellent" grades.
- About three out of five students (57%) were "Prepared".
- Less than 1 in 10 (9%) of the students earned "Needs Improvement" grades.

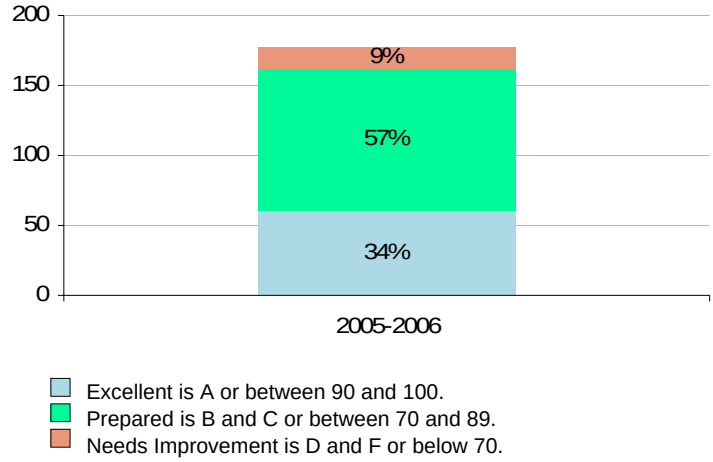

Figure 2: Math Performance
Current Students Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore

Report cards were obtained for 171 scholarship recipients.

Science

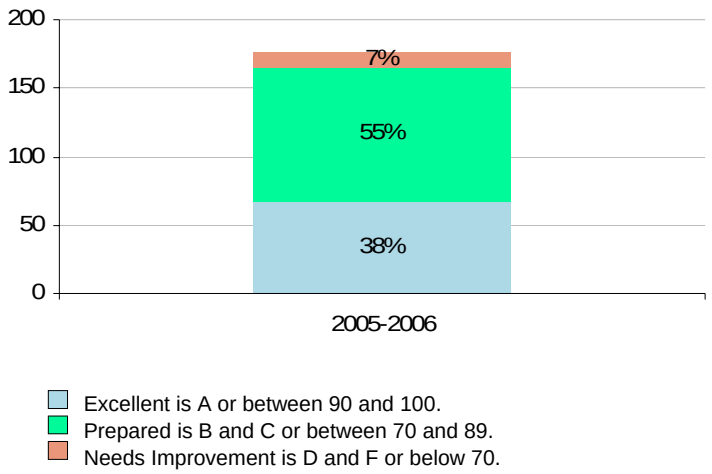

Figure 3: Science Performance
Current Students Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore

Report cards were obtained for 171 scholarship recipients.

- About two out of five students (38%) earned "Excellent" grades.
- About half of the students (55%) were "Prepared".
- Less than 1 in 10 (7%) of the students earned "Needs Improvement" grades.

Social Studies

- About two out of five students (41%) earned "Excellent" grades.
- About half of the students (54%) were "Prepared".
- Less than 1 in 10 (5%) of the students earned "Needs Improvement" grades.

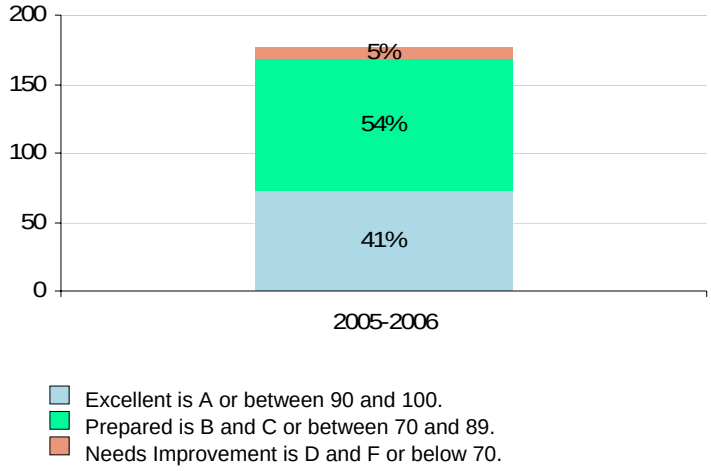

Figure 4: Social Studies Performance
Current Students Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore

Report cards were obtained for 171 scholarship recipients.

Academic Performance

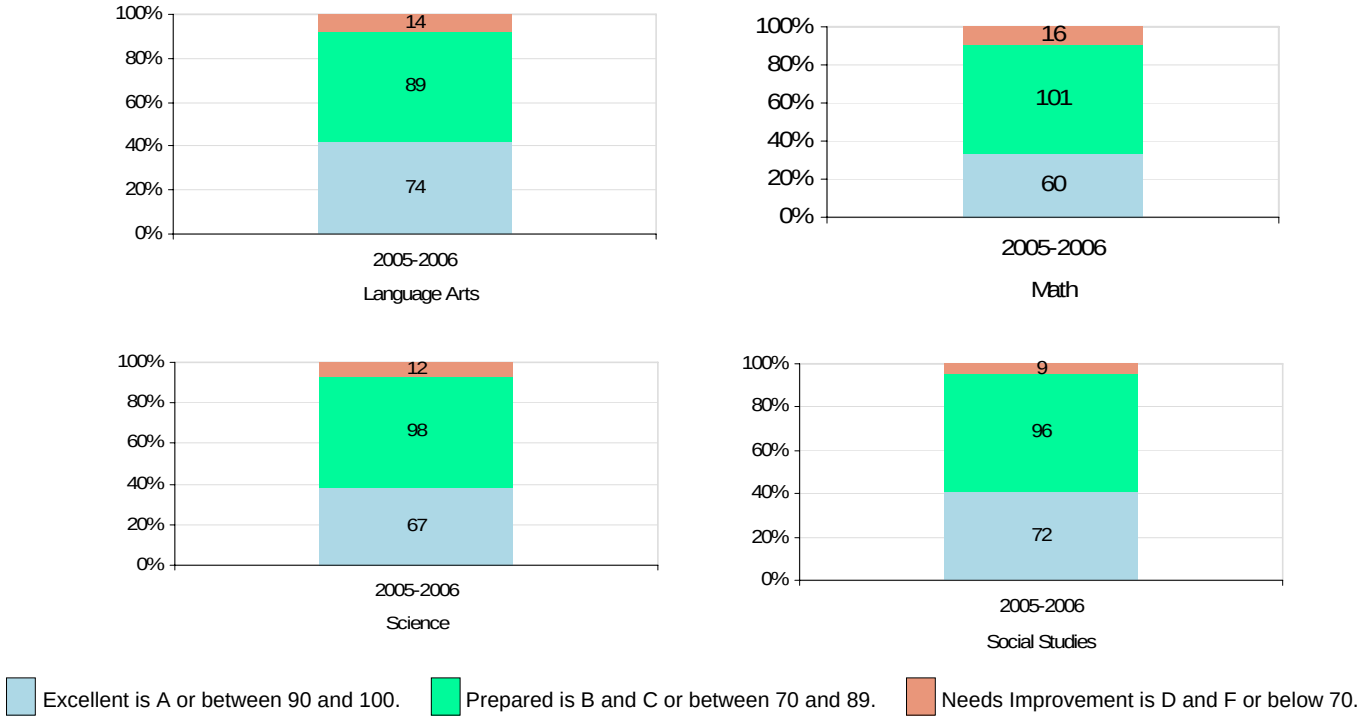

Figure 5: Academic Performance
Current Students Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore

Report cards were obtained for 171 scholarship recipients.

About one-third of the students earned "Excellent" math grades while about two out of five students earned "Excellent" grades in language arts, science and social studies.

About half the students earned "Prepared" grades in language arts, science and social studies while about three out of five students earned "Prepared" grades in math.

Less than one in ten students earned "Needs Improvement" grades in all the academic disciplines.

Rationale for Recoding Grades

Grades for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Calvary Lutheran and several schools with a small number of scholarship recipients were recoded. B+ grades were changed to A and C+ grades were changed to B. These changes were made because three out of four numerical grades in the range were in the A or B category used by the Children's Scholarship Fund.

B+ grades at Archdiocese schools ranged from 89 – 92. Grades of 89 would not be in the "Excellent" range. However, grades of 90 though 92 were above the "Prepared" range. Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore decided to recode these B+ grades to A. It seemed likely that fewer students with a grade of 89 would be placed in the incorrect group. The alternative would involve placing students with three grades, 90 through 92, in the incorrect group.

At Calvary Lutheran B+ grades range from 90 – 91 were recoded because they were in the "Excellent" range.

Similar rationale was used to recode C+ grades.

Assessing Academic Success for Children in Early Academic Years

Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore did not report academic performance for scholarship recipients in grades kindergarten through second grade. A research project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K) informed the Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore's position.

The ECSL-K research demonstrated that children in the early academic grades, kindergarten through second grade, came to school with a variety of skill levels and gained skills at different rates.

> Children entered kindergarten with a wide variety of cognitive and general knowledge skills that include reading and mathematics (West 2000.) Gains were made in reading and math skills during kindergarten (West 2000.) However, children developed specific knowledge and skills (e.g. letter recognition, letter sound connections, relative size and numbers) at different rates. (West 2000.) According to Denton (2002), "Both reports revealed that while first-time kindergartners are similar in many ways, their knowledge and skills differ in relation to their age at school entry, race/ethnicity, health status, home educational experiences, and child care histories."

Schools have chosen to use multiple measures of cognitive and general knowledge skills due to young children's wide variation in skills and gains. The Early Childhood Center, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (Indiana 2006) summarized this practice:

> "The design of individual assessment and program evaluation practices provides multiple approaches to finding out what children know and can do in order to equitably assess individual learning, development, and educational progress."

Reports cards collected from the Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore's kindergarten to second grade scholarship recipients in 2006 demonstrated the use of multiple measures. For example:

- Archdiocese of Baltimore report cards included eight language arts, eight language development, twelve reading and thirteen math skills.

- Bethlehem Christian Day School report cards included eleven language arts, eleven reading, five oral expression, four spelling, fourteen math, two science and two social studies skills.

- Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim report cards included two reading, three written language, oral expression, math, science and social studies skills.

Because current research demonstrated young children's variations in skills and gains, the Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore began tracking of academic performance with scholarship recipients in the third grade.

Response Rate

Three hundred thirty-seven students in grades three through eight received scholarships for the 2005 – 2006 school year. One hundred seventy-one report cards were obtained. The response rate was fifty-one percent.

The percentage of report cards for each grade was a reasonably close match with the percentage of students in each grade.

Table 1
Report Cards Returned

Grade	Number of Scholarship Recipients	Percent of Scholarship Recipients	Number of Report Cards Returned	Percent of Report Cards Returned
Third	131	39%	62	36%
Fourth	51	15%	20	12%
Fifth	53	16%	24	14%
Sixth	66	20%	42	25%
Seventh	33	10%	20	12%
Eighth	3	1%	3	2%

Because Children's Scholarship Fund summarized the data by grouping children according to academic performance, determining the response rate needed for a ninety-five percent confidence level was not necessary.

Data Collection Procedures

A letter was sent to parents of three hundred thirty-seven current scholarship recipients and parents of one hundred twenty-six alumni.

Phone calls were made to parents. At least two attempts were made to reach parents with busy, message or no answer phone contacts.

Thirty-seven parents of current students could not be reached by phone due to busy signal (3), no answer (11), no longer at number or disconnected (14) and wrong number (9).

Thirty-six parents of alumni could not be reached by phone due to busy signal (12), no answer (4), no longer at number or disconnected (16) and wrong number (4).

Messages were left for ninety-eight parents of current students and twenty-eight parents of alumni.

The decision to eliminate scholarship recipients in kindergarten through second grade was made after report cards were collected.

The number of report cards collected for scholarship recipients in kindergarten to second grade was not counted.

A decision was made to restrict research to current scholarship recipients because nine out of ten scholarship recipients (91%) who left the program before eighth grade had been in the program for three years or less.

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BASIC Fund Evaluation

Final Report

Presented to: **The BASIC Fund**
San Francisco
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Presented by:

Melissa Saphir, Ph.D.
Melanie Moore Kubo, Ph.D.

Contact for Questions: Meghan Magilligan
Administrative Director, The BASIC Fund
meghan@basicFund.org
415-986-7221

Executive Summary

Overview of Evaluation

- *Launch Date:* May 2006.
- *Length of Study:* One year.
- *Research Question:* Are students better off as a result of BASIC Fund support?
- *Four Components:* Results for all components of the research are presented in this report.
  1. Standardized Test Score Analysis
  2. High School Graduation Rates
  3. Review of Research Literature on Elementary Age Predictors of High School Graduation
  4. Surveys of Renewal and Attrition Parents

Standardized Test Score Analysis

- *Overall Conclusion Based on First Year Test Score Findings*

> As measured by performance on standardized tests in elementary school, students are better off as a result of BASIC Fund support. Academic performance tends to improve (up to 10 percentiles) over one year, and the more years of support students receive, the better they perform.

- *Large Sample for Drawing Conclusions:* 1,202 students.
  - ✓ Response Rate: 54% of schools, representing 60% of students.
- *Measures:* National percentile ranks in reading, language, and math on Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
  - ✓ Percentiles Are Not Grades Like As or Fs: Percentiles between 25% and 75% are average.
- *Three Key Findings Contribute to Overall Conclusion*
  1. BASIC Fund students score 18 to 26 percentiles lower than other private school students.

> *Conclusion: BASIC Fund students attend schools that can challenge them and can help them grow academically.*

  2. Over one year, every statistically significant percentile change—representing more than half of the change scores examined—was positive).

Grade	Reading	Language	Math
2-3	—	9.6*	5.8*
3-4	3.5*	—	2.9*
4-5	—	2.5*	—
5-6	—	—	—
6-7	6.3*	3.3*	4.0*

> *Conclusion: BASIC Fund students do better over one year in reading, language, and math.*

3. Every statistically significant correlation between years of BASIC Fund support and percentiles is positive.

Grade	Reading	Language	Math
3	—	—	—
4	—	—	—
5	—	0.14**	0.10†
6	0.11*	0.13*	—
7	—	—	—
8	0.13†	0.13†	—

Conclusion:
The more years of BASIC Fund support an elementary student receives, the better the student performs.

High School Graduation Rates

o *Methods:* Among 224 former BASIC Fund students from the eighth grade class of 2003, we determined the number who are on track to graduate, using telephone calls, email, and postal mail; peer networking; contacting former elementary schools; contacting private and public high schools; accessing public records; and administering an on-line survey.

o *Progress Since Board Meeting:* In April we reported that among the 79 students (35% of the class) we had contacted, 100% were on track to graduate. Since then, we have contacted an additional 102 students (81% of the class), with almost no change in the graduation rate.

o *Three Key Findings*

1. Among former BASIC Fund students we reached, **99%** graduated or are on track to graduate. We found only one student who has dropped out without graduating.
2. Even if we made the extremely conservative assumption that **none** of the unreachable students graduated, the overall graduation rate of former BASIC Fund students would still be substantially **higher** (80%) than the public school graduation rates of San Francisco (73%) and Oakland (46%). These differences are statistically significant at $p < .01$ and $p < .001$, respectively. A more reasonable assumption is that the unreachable students are graduating at rates comparable to the public schools.

	Graduation Rate
BASIC Fund Eighth Grade Class of 2003	
Actual graduation rate (excluding unreachable students)	99%
Range of reasonable estimates (including unreachable students)	89-94%
Most conservative estimate (including unreachable students)	80%
San Francisco Unified School District	73%
Oakland Unified School District	46%

3. A majority of BASIC Fund students are Hispanic (47%) or black (23%), yet the BASIC Fund graduation rate is **much higher** than the rates for Hispanics and blacks in public schools, which range from 23% in Oakland to 49% in San Francisco.

Review of Literature

- *Elementary Predictors of High School Graduation*
  - ✓ Predictors of *Not* Graduating: Number of failed courses; number of failed grade levels; misbehavior at school; family stress (such as divorce, marriage, illness, adults joining or leaving household, moving); number of siblings; number of schools attended.
  - ✓ Predictors of *Graduating*: Parent education level; parent socio-economic status; parent expectations for child's current school performance; parent aspirations for child's future schooling; parent feeling of responsibility for child's school performance; positive parent socialization practices (including reading with child, helping with homework, and providing access to extra-curricular learning environments and summer activities).

Parent Survey Highlights

- *224 Renewal Families*
  - ✓ Predictors of *Not* Graduating
    1. Family Stress: A majority (58%) of BASIC Fund families have experienced at least one major stressor in the past year, and 12% of families experienced two to four stressors. The most common stressors (each experienced by 12 to 16% of families) are illness or death in the family; job loss; divorce or separation; and moving.
    2. Low Parent Education: 4% neither graduated high school nor earned GED. 16% have a GED. 19% have no schooling beyond high school. 18% graduated 4-year college.
    3. Child Risks: 45% of students have two or more siblings. 29% attended two or more elementary schools before private school. 24% have had a behavior problem at school. 7% repeated a grade. 2% failed a subject (without repeating a grade).
  - ✓ Predictors of *Graduating*
    1. More Access to Extracurricular Activities: Now that children are in private school, 43% of children go to extra classes and activities during the school year, significantly more than when they were in public school (20%).
    2. Aspirations for Future Schooling: 43% of parents expect their children to go to private high school, but 86% of parents believe cost of tuition will be a barrier. 29% of parents see two or more barriers to sending their children to private high school.
- *71 Attrition Families*
  - ✓ Most Common Reasons for Not Renewing: Inability to afford tuition even with BASIC Fund help (38% of Attrition Families); moving (23%); child not liking the private school (18%); parent not liking the private school (11%).
  - ✓ Reasons Cited by Less than 10% of Families: No longer qualifying for BASIC Fund assistance; public schools providing services for special needs; receiving tuition assistance directly from a private school; private school was too challenging; discipline problems; and difficulty with BASIC Fund paperwork.
  - ✓ More At Risk: Attrition families reported significantly more stressful events in the past year than Renewal families.

Overview of Evaluation

In May 2006, The BASIC Fund and See Change Evaluation launched a year-long evaluation of The BASIC Fund. The overarching research question was, "Are students better off as a result of receiving BASIC Fund support?"

This evaluation had four components, each intended to answer one aspect of this question:

1. *Standardized Test Scores:* To assess short- and medium-term effects of BASIC Fund support on elementary students' school performance, we collected and analyzed the standardized test scores of elementary students currently supported by The BASIC Fund.

2. *High School Graduation Rates:* To assess long-term effects of BASIC Fund support after elementary school, we assessed the high school graduation rates of a cohort of students formerly supported by The BASIC Fund.

3. *Review of Literature:* We reviewed research literature to determine current rates of graduation in the nation, state, and San Francisco Bay area, as well as factors influencing high school graduation rates.

4. *Surveys of Parents:* We surveyed parents whose children receive BASIC Fund support, to compare parental involvement in private schools with their previous involvement in public schools, and to assess likelihood of sending students to private high school after BASIC Fund support ends. We also surveyed parents who have chosen not to renew their children's scholarships, to examine their reasons for withdrawal from the program.

The remainder of this report reviews in detail the findings of this evaluation study.

The BASIC Fund in Context

The BASIC Fund provides partial scholarships for low-income students to attend private or parochial school in grades K-8. Parents apply for a scholarship based on financial need, and if accepted, the BASIC Fund guarantees support throughout a child's elementary education. Scholarships cover only a portion of the private school tuition, requiring that the parent also make a contribution, but the scholarships likely make private schooling affordable for families who would not otherwise be able to afford it. Similar programs exist in other major cities, for example, New York and Philadelphia. In these other cities, long waiting lists exist for the scholarships. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the BASIC Fund is able to support all the students who apply.

The goal of the BASIC Fund is to increase the educational opportunities available to low-income students. It is expected that the opportunity to attend a private or parochial school will support and extend a student's academic performance, perhaps because these schools are often smaller, with more individual attention per student. Many private and parochial schools also have high expectations for parent involvement in a child's education, a factor that is often associated with strong academic

performance. Whatever the mechanism, the BASIC Fund expects that the opportunity to attend a private or parochial school in grades K-8 will provide a strong foundation for future academic success in high school and beyond.

This evaluation was designed to test these assumptions. Through an exploration of students' standardized test scores, we examined whether or not students' academic performance improves over time once they are attending the private schools. By collecting data on high school graduation rates for the current year's twelfth-grade class of students who formerly participated in the BASIC Fund, we examined the BASIC Fund's long-term effect on students' performance. In addition, we conducted a literature review on factors influencing high school graduation rates, and structured a parent survey that examined the presence or absence of these factors in the families of BASIC Fund students. Finally, we conducted a survey with families who had left the BASIC Fund after received at least one year of support, to examine their reasons for leaving the program.

Without the benefit of random assignment, or a systematically-structured comparison group of students (for example, a matched group of students in public schools), the findings of this evaluation must be interpreted as correlational, rather than causal. In other words, there may be factors that define the group of students and families who choose to accept BASIC Fund support that would lead to their academic success, independent of this support. For example, parents who apply for the BASIC Fund for their child may already be very involved in their children's education. A recent U.S. Department of Education study comparing student performance in private versus public schools found impressive statistically significant differences between student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), with private schools, on average, scoring higher.[1] However, when individual characteristics of children were controlled for, most of these differences evaporated. In other words, there are students who do well on the tests in public schools, just as there are in private schools, and students in both settings who also do poorly. Rather than compare performance on the basis of school type, it is more informative to compare performance based on student characteristics that may influence performance, no matter what the educational setting. The most informative study would analyze performance by examining how student characteristics may interact with school type, especially over time. For example, do low-income students of color tend to do better or worse in public versus private schools?

In designing our methodology, we sought ways to move beyond a blanket, cross-sectional comparison of school type, and test for a more direct effect of BASIC Fund support on the particular students and families involved, especially over time.

[1] Braun, H., Jenkins, F., and Grigg, W. (2006). *Comparing Private Schools and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling* (NCES 2006-461). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Standardized Test Score Findings

Data Collection Methods: In June 2006 we sent a letter to BASIC Fund-supported private schools requesting all standardized scores on file for the 4,070 students supported by The BASIC Fund during the 2005-2006 school year. BASIC Fund application materials already include a request for parental consent to release scores, so no schools objected to releasing students' scores. BASIC Fund staff followed up by telephone with principals of schools to insure a complete response.

Initial Analysis Plan: We had hoped simply to compare students' private school scores to their scores from their last year in public schools, but this has turned out not to be feasible for two reasons. First, far fewer private schools than we anticipated have students' public scores on file. More important, we learned that in California, public and private schools use different standardized tests, and these tests are not comparable. California public schools use the CAT/9 test, which is not available to private schools. The private schools use several different tests, the most common of which are the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Stanford Achievement Test.

Revised Analysis Plan: Because we could not compare students' performance on the CAT/9 test administered in public schools to other tests administered in private school, we conducted a two-part analysis. First, we compared BASIC Fund students' scores to the scores for the entire San Francisco Archdiocese, which uses the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Second, for students who have several years of test scores in private school, we conducted a longitudinal analysis of whether their scores are improving over time.

Response Rates: We excluded from the evaluation nine schools (with 123 students supported by The BASIC Fund) that do not administer standardized tests. We also excluded students in kindergarten and first grade, because many schools (including the entire San Francisco Archdiocese and the Diocese of Oakland) do not administer standardized tests until second grade.

We received scores from 104 of the 191 schools that had students in second grade or higher who were supported by The BASIC Fund during the 2005-2006 school year (a school response rate of 54%). We collected standardized test scores for 1,202 of the 2,010 BASIC Fund students at these schools in the 2005-2006 school year (a student response rate of 60%).

Table 1 (below) shows the distribution of test types we encountered. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is the most common test, followed by the Stanford Achievement Test. Our analyses focus on the Iowa tests in grades 2 through 7, because there are enough scores to draw conclusions.

Table 1. Distribution of Test Types

	Grade Level in Elementary School					
Test Type	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
Iowa	371	435	442	426	442	342
Stanford	291	235	180	92	41	30
Terra Nova	8	5	3	5	3	0
ERB	0	4	4	5	9	5
Other	10	23	32	22	24	13
Total	680	702	661	550	518	372

What Are Percentiles? All of the standardized tests cover three subject areas—Reading, Language, and Math—and convert students' raw scores in these three subjects to national percentile ranks (abbreviated in this report as *percentiles*). Percentiles range from 1 (the lowest score) to 99 (the highest score).

Percentiles are based on national samples of students who complete the standardized tests. A student's percentile for a certain subtest indicates how that student compares (or *ranks*) to students in the same grade across the nation who took the same test. For example, if a BASIC Fund student has a percentile of 40 for second grade Reading, this means the student performed as well as or better than 40% of second grade students across the nation on the Reading subtest. If a BASIC Fund student has a percentile of 70 for fifth grade Math, this means the student performed as well as or better than 70% of fifth grade students across the nation on the Math subtest.

*Percentiles Are **Not** Grades Like As or Fs:* When interpreting our results, it is important to keep in mind what national percentile ranks are. Because percentiles range from 1 to 99, it may be tempting to think of them as grades like As, Bs, Cs, Ds, or Fs. However, percentiles are **not** grades, as the following example illustrates.

On a typical test graded on a 100-point system, most students make grades of A (90s), B (80s), or C (70s), and only a small number of students make grades of D (60s) or F (failing, 50s and less). In contrast, percentiles are designed such that 10% of students fall in the 10th percentile, 20% of students fall into the 20th percentile, and so on. As a result, 60% of students score in the 60th percentile *or lower*. Thus, if percentiles were interpreted as grades, it would mean that *by definition*, 60% of students fail or make a D on every standardized test.

According to the publisher of the Iowa test, percentiles between 25% and 75% represent average performance. Education experts do not expect students' percentiles to change from year to year, *unless something changes in the education they receive.* That is, there is no expectation that students "naturally" progress from low percentiles in second grade to higher percentiles by higher grades. Instead, it takes an entire year's worth of learning for a student to rank at the same percentile one year later, and it takes even more learning for a student's percentile to increase.

For the purposes of this analysis, percentiles should be interpreted simply as a metric for comparing a student's performance to his or her own performance over time, and as a way to compare BASIC Fund students to the average performance of entire schools.

Results—Comparison of Iowa and Stanford Averages: Table 2 (below) compares the average percentiles of BASIC Fund students on the Iowa and Stanford tests. In general, percentiles for the Stanford tests tend to be slightly higher than percentiles for the Iowa tests. Nevertheless, both tests paint a similar picture of BASIC Fund students scoring near the center of the national averages. Younger students (grades 2 through 4) perform at or just below the fiftieth percentile, and older students (grades 5 through 7) perform at or just above the fiftieth percentile. Although this pattern is consistent with students doing better as they spend more years in private schools, a longitudinal analysis is necessary to determine whether students changed over time.

Because of the small numbers of students with scores for the Stanford test, especially in the higher grades, the rest of our analyses focus on scores for the Iowa test.

Table 2. Average National Percentile Ranks for Reading, Language, and Math

Grade Level	Reading		Language		Math	
	Iowa	*Stanford*	*Iowa*	*Stanford*	*Iowa*	*Stanford*
2	47	49	42	46	38	46
3	47	49	52	45	47	47
4	50	46	53	47	49	40
5	51	40	53	44	47	47
6	46	44†	51	53†	47	53†
7	51	52†	52	57†	51	53†

†Note: Averages for the Stanford Achievement Test in grades 6 and 7 are based on very small sample sizes (28 to 40 students). Sample sizes for all other averages reported in this table range from 88 students (for the Stanford Language subtest, grade 5) to 441 (for the Iowa Language and Reading subtests, grade 6).

Results—Comparison to School Averages: We are just beginning the process of collecting school-wide standardized test averages from the private schools attended by BASIC Fund students. So far, we have a report of scores for the entire San Francisco Archdiocese, which uses the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Table 3 (below) compares the average percentiles for the Archdiocese to the average percentiles of first-year BASIC Fund students who took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Table 3. Comparison of Percentiles for San Francisco Archdiocese and First-Year BASIC Fund Students

Grade Level	Reading		Language		Math	
	Archdiocese	*BASIC FUND Students*	*Archdiocese*	*BASIC FUND Students*	*Archdiocese*	*BASIC FUND Students*
2	67	52	60	47	56	37
3	70	49	75	51	68	51
4	74	43	79	46	71	48
5	75	44	78	47	72	47
6	68	41	73	47	68	50
7	74	56	76	51	73	52

Notes: Data in this table are based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The columns for BASIC Fund Students may include students who did not attend Catholic schools. Scores for eighth-graders are not given because there were fewer than 10 students who started the BASIC Fund in eighth grade.

Table 3 shows that in all three subject areas, and in all six grades, the averages for the San Francisco Archdiocese as a whole are higher than the averages for BASIC Fund students when they start attending private school. Average percentiles for the Archdiocese range from 56 (for second grade Math) to 79 (for fourth grade Language). The differences between the Archdiocese averages and first-year BASIC Fund student averages range from a low of 13 percentiles (for second grade Language) to a high of 33 percentiles (for fourth grade Language).

It should not be surprising that first-year BASIC Fund student averages are lower than the Archdiocese averages. After all, students supported by The BASIC Fund come from low-income backgrounds, and their parents presumably seek help from The BASIC Fund to send their children to schools where they think their children will do better. Indeed, it would be disturbing if the Archdiocese's averages were as low as the first-year students' averages, because this would indicate that the students were already doing as well as was possible for them given their new schools' performance. In other words, this large difference between the Archdiocese's averages and first-year BASIC Fund student averages leads us to conclude that:

The new schools attended by elementary students supported by The BASIC Fund have the potential to challenge them and help them grow academically.

Longitudinal Results—Change Over One Year: If students are better off as a result of receiving BASIC Fund support, our expectation is that their percentiles will improve over time, whether or not their scores ever rise as high as their private schools' averages.

To test this, we computed change scores for students with two or more years of test scores. That is, for a student with data for grade 2 *and* for grade 3, we subtracted the Reading percentile for grade 2 from the Reading percentile from grade 3. If the result is positive, it indicates that the student's reading improved from grade 2 to grade 3. If the result is negative, it indicates the student's reading got worse over time.

Table 4 (below) summarizes the average change scores for every pair of years between grades 2 and 7.

Table 4. Average Change in Percentiles over One Year

Grade Levels	Reading	Language	Math
	Iowa	*Iowa*	*Iowa*
2-3	-1.1	9.6*	5.8*
3-4	3.5*	0.9	2.9*
4-5	0.6	2.5*	-1.6
5-6	-1.8	-0.4	-0.1
6-7	6.3*	3.3*	4.0*

Notes: Data in this table are based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Positive change scores indicate average improvement from one grade to the next, and negative change scores indicate average declines from one grade to the next. An asterisk (*) indicates that an average change score is, statistically speaking, *significantly different from zero* (no change) at $p < .05$ or less. Results that are *statistically significant* are more reliable than other results in the table, which may *seem* large simply by chance, often because the sample size is too small to detect a change.

The results in Table 4 are quite encouraging. The average change scores range from a low of -1.8 (for the Reading subtest between grades 4 and 5), to a high of 9.6 (for the Language subtest between grades 2 and 3). However, what really matters are the average change scores marked by an asterisk (*). These are the changes that, from a statistical point of view, are significantly different from zero (no change).

In Table 4, *every statistically significant change is positive*. In other words, as indicated by the asterisks in Table 4, 8 of 15 of the average changes over one year (53% of the statistical tests) are significant and positive. In contrast, there is no statistically significant evidence that students supported by The BASIC Fund do worse over time in any subject area.

We conclude from Table 4 that:

Elementary students supported by The BASIC Fund tend to do better over one year in reading, language, and math.

The size of the statistically significant improvements corresponds to 3 to 10 percentiles. Evidence for improvement is particularly strong for the Language subtest, for which the change scores on one or both tests is significantly positive for every one-year span except between grades 5 and 6. For all three subject areas, evidence for improvement over time is strongest between grades 2 and 4 and between grades 6 and 7. The only one-year span with no evidence of change is between grades 5 and 6, which in many schools coincides with a students' movement from the "lower grades" to the "upper grades," or from elementary to middle school.

Longitudinal Results—Association Between Years of Support and Scores: Another way to examine whether students benefit from BASIC Fund support is to test whether the number of years of BASIC Fund support is associated with students' scores. In other words, do students who have more years of support have higher percentiles than students with fewer years of support?

To answer this question, we computed *correlation coefficients* between students' percentiles and the number of years that students were supported by The BASIC Fund.

A correlation coefficient measures the strength of the association between two measures. A *positive* correlation indicates that the two variables go up and down together—in other words, a positive correlation means that students with more Funding do *better*, as indicated by higher percentiles. A *negative* correlation indicates that the two variables go in opposite directions—in other words, a negative correlation means that students with more Funding do *worse*. A *zero* correlation (including all correlations that are *not statistically significant*) indicates that two variables are unrelated—that is, students' percentiles may be high or low, regardless of how much support they received.

Table 5 (below) presents the results of this analysis.

Table 5. Correlations Between Years of Support and Percentiles

Grade Levels	Reading	Language	Math
2	0.04	-0.03	-0.06
3	0.00	0.02	0.01
4	0.01	-0.02	0.01
5	0.08	0.14**	0.10†
6	0.11*	0.13*	0.07
7	0.08	0.06	-0.02
8	0.13†	0.13†	0.04

Notes: Data in this table are based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
Asterisks and Daggers: Positive correlations mean students with more years of Funding have better scores. Asterisks and daggers indicate correlations that are statistically significant at ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, and † $p < .10$. The smaller the value of p, the lower the probability that a correlation this size would be observed simply by chance.
Dashes: A dash (—) indicates that a correlation was, statistically speaking, not significantly different from zero. A correlation may be non-significant because years of support were unrelated to test scores, or because the sample size is too small to detect a significant relationship between years of support and test scores.

As with the previous table, what matters in Table 5 are the correlations with asterisks and daggers, which indicate whether the correlations are significantly different from zero.

In Table 5, *every statistically significant correlation is positive.* There is no statistically significant evidence that students do worse with more years of BASIC Fund support.

We conclude from Table 5 that:

The more years of BASIC Fund support an elementary student receives, the better the student performs.

Evidence for improvement is particularly strong for students in the higher grades (grades 5, 6, and 8), presumably because students in grades 2 through 4 have not yet had as many years to benefit from private schooling. The Language and Reading subtests show the strongest association with years of BASIC Fund support.

Overall Conclusion Based on Test Score Findings: The overall conclusion that we draw from these three findings is that, as measured by performance on standardized tests in elementary school, students are better off as a result of receiving BASIC Fund support. In other words:

Academic performance of BASIC Fund students tends to improve (up to 10 percentiles) over one year, and the more years of support students receive, the better they perform.

Recommendation for Future Data Collection: At the time of this writing, some schools still had not provided their students' test scores, despite their intention to do so. As test scores become available for more students, it will be possible to conduct further analyses of the data, for example, comparing boys and girls, students with two parents versus one parent at home, and students in schools with expensive tuition versus inexpensive tuition.

The BASIC Fund already requires parents to sign a release form, allowing the schools to report the students' grades and test scores to the program. Because schools are busy and may have difficulty complying with the BASIC Fund's request for these scores, it is perhaps more practical to require participating families to provide a copy of their children's test scores to the BASIC Fund each year, as part of the application process. BASIC Fund staff could enter the test score data into the database already created for the purposes of this evaluation, and periodically (for example, once every three years) hire a data analyst to provide a report of student progress.

Graduation Rates of Former BASIC Fund Students

To assess the long-term impact of the BASIC Fund, we determined the graduation rate of 223 former BASIC Fund students who graduated eighth grade in spring 2003. Currently, the BASIC Fund does not keep in contact with students past the 8th grade, or their last year of support. We contacted students at their last known address, and yielded information on only a fraction of the students. To increase our response rate, we used a variety of methods to contact students, including contacting their former elementary schools, current high schools where the student might be enrolled, conducting online searches of websites such as "MySpace" and "Facebook," purchasing online "people finder" services, incentivizing students to respond with a $10 iTunes giftcard, and contacting friends of the targeted students who might know whether or not they were graduating. In the end, we reached 181 out of the 223 former BASIC Fund students (an 81% response rate).

- *Three Key Findings*

  1. Among former BASIC Fund students we reached (181 students), **99%** (180 students) graduated or are on track to graduate. We found only one student who has dropped out without graduating.
  2. Even if we made the extremely conservative assumption that **none** of the unreachable students graduated, the overall graduation rate of former BASIC Fund students would still be substantially **higher** (80%) than the public school graduation rates of San Francisco (73%) and Oakland (46%). These differences are statistically significant at $p < .01$ and $p < .001$, respectively. A more reasonable assumption is that the unreachable students are graduating at rates comparable to the public schools.

Table 6: Graduation Rates Comparison

	Graduation Rate
BASIC Fund Eighth Grade Class of 2003	
Actual graduation rate (excluding unreachable students)	99%
Range[a] of reasonable estimates (including unreachable students)	89-94%
Most conservative estimate (including unreachable students)	80%
San Francisco Unified School District[b]	73%
Oakland Unified School District[b]	46%[c]

Notes:
a. These estimates are based on the following equation:
([percent of BASIC FUND students found]x[the found BASIC FUND students' actual graduation rate]) + ([percent of BASIC FUND students NOT found] x [estimated graduation rate]). The low end of the range is based on the assumption that the unreachable kids graduated at rates comparable to Oakland's: (.81x.99) + (.19x.46) = .89 = 89%. The high end of the range is based on the assumption that the unreachable kids graduated at rates comparable to San Francisco's: (.81x.99) + (.19x.73) = .94 = 94%.
b. Public school data are from 2006 because this year's rates have not yet been reported. UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access reports that the trend in California graduation rates has been downward over the past 5 years.
c. Rates for public school districts vary, depending on whether the district, state, or independent researchers calculate them. UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access calculates that Oakland's rate for 2006 was 37%; California's State Department of Education calculates that it was 46%. Both organizations report San Francisco's rate as 73% for 2006.

3. A majority of BASIC Fund students are Hispanic (47%) or black (23%), yet the BASIC Fund graduation rate is **much higher** than the rates for Hispanics and blacks in public schools (which range from 23% in Oakland to 49% in San Francisco[2]).

Recommendations for Future Data Collection: It was very costly and time-consuming to contact students who had not had any dealings with the BASIC Fund for four years. If the BASIC Fund desires to keep track of high school graduation rates in the future, we recommend that this data is collected as a routine part of families' BASIC Fund experience. The following strategies would facilitate ongoing data collection of this type:

1. Maintain Contact With Families: Make continuing contact with BASIC Fund *after* tuition assistance ends an expectation from the beginning with families. For example:
   a. Include the expectation of continuing contact on the parent contract or application.
   b. Set up a system of contacting families annually after assistance ends. This could be as simple as a postcard asking them to check in via a very short and simple web-based survey. The survey would ask where the former BASIC Fund-assisted child is now going to school and how the child is doing, perhaps with enough thank you's and links to helpful information relevant to high school and college to make parents feel that there is a benefit to them for staying in contact with BASIC Fund.

[2] Swanson, C. B. (2002). *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001*. Urban Institute Education Policy Center.

2. Cultivate Schools for Back-Up Information: Privacy concerns—as well as the practical reality that eighth graders scatter to many different high schools—make it unlikely that *all* graduation information will ever be collected directly from high schools. However, it would still be worthwhile to use schools as a back-up source of information, especially for families who don't stay in direct contact with BASIC Fund. For example:

    a. Include in BASIC Fund application materials a release that parents would sign, legally giving BASIC Fund the right to collect graduation information on the BASIC Fund-assisted child in the future, which BASIC Fund staff could then use with a high school that refuses to give information about a particular child.

    b. Cultivate the expectation with BASIC Fund-supported elementary schools that they should annually report to BASIC Fund where BASIC Fund-supported eighth graders are going to high school. In some cases, this may require persuading elementary schools that they should start systematically collecting such information.

    c. Build closer relationships with Bay Area high schools, private and public, so that administrators who would be looking up and handing out graduation information are not surprised by BASIC Fund requests for information and will help BASIC FUND staff find ways to get needed information despite privacy rules. (For example, this year, Jim's personal relationships with Oakland and San Francisco Catholic superintendents enabled Meghan to get information that had been difficult to get directly from the Catholic high schools. For the San Francisco public schools, Meghan eventually found out that she could make a public records request—but it took a while to find someone who would tell her this.)

3. Develop Relationships with Former Students: Many high school students we contacted did not know that they had previously received BASIC Fund scholarships, so they had no feeling of obligation to respond to our calls and letters. Yet as students progress through high school and approach adulthood, it may make more sense to maintain contact with the former students directly rather than (or in addition to) their parents. For example:

    a. To remind (or inform) students that they benefited from BASIC Fund scholarships, send a short annual newsletter for "BASIC Fund Alumni" to ninth- through twelfth-graders.

    b. To get updated information from students, send annual postcards to them (instead of, or in addition to, their parents), asking them to make contact via a web survey. As incentives, offer small, youth-oriented rewards such as iTunes gift certificates, or raffle a larger incentive.

    c. Offer a one-time monetary reward (for example, $100) for proof of graduation from high school.

Literature Review: Elementary Age Predictors of High School Graduation

The BASIC Fund provides the opportunity for children to attend the private or parochial school of their choice from Kindergarten through the 8th grade, but it does not provide scholarships or services to youth in high school. A key assumption of the BASIC Fund is that a firm academic foundation in elementary school will increase the likelihood of a student graduating from high school. The very high rate of BASIC Fund students who we determined have gone on to complete high school supports this hypothesis. In addition to school, there are family and individual factors that also affect the likelihood of a student graduating. We conducted a literature review to examine what research has concluded about predictors of high school graduation that appear in the elementary grades.

- *Elementary Predictors of High School Graduation*
  - ✓ Predictors of *Not* Graduating:

We compiled a list from our review of several studies[3] of factors that predict a student *not* graduating from high school. This list includes:

- Number of failed courses
- Number of failed grade levels
- Misbehavior at school
- Family stress (such as divorce, marriage, illness, adults joining or leaving household, moving)
- Number of siblings
- Number of schools attended

There seem to be two types of factors associated with high school dropout: family factors, and individual behavior factors. These two sets of factors undoubtedly interact with each other, with family factors being a likely contributor to poor performance and behavior at school. School type (public versus private) does *not* appear to predict whether or not a student will graduate from high school.

[3] Alexander, K. L., Entwisly, D. R., Horsey, C. S. (1997). *From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout.* Sociology of Education, Vol. 70, No. 2. April, pp. 87-107; Barrington, Byron L., *Differentiating Characteristics of High School Graduates, Dropouts, and Nongraduates* , Journal of Educational Research, 82:6 (1989:July/Aug.) p.309; Bridgeland, J.M., DiIulio, J.J., Morison, K.B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspecitves of high school dropouts.* Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Ensminger, M.E., Slusarcick, A.L. (1992). *Paths to high school graduation or dropout: A longitudinal study of a first-grade cohort.* Sociology of Education, Vol. 65, No. 2. April, pp. 95-113; Garnier, H.E., Stein, J. A., Jacobs, J.K. (1997). *The process of dropping out of high school: A 19-year perspective.* American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 34, No. 2. Summer, pp. 395-419; Goldschmidt, P., Wang, J. (1999). *When can schools affect dropout behavior? A longitudinal multilevel analysis.* American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 36, No. 4. Winter, pp. 715-738.

✓ Predictors of *Graduating*:

These studies also pointed to predictors of a student graduating from high school. This list includes:

- Parent education level
- Parent socio-economic status
- Parent expectations for child's current school performance
- Parent aspirations for child's future schooling
- Parent feeling of responsibility for child's school performance
- Positive parent socialization practices (including reading with child, helping with homework, and providing access to extra-curricular learning environments and summer activities)

While individual behavior factors predicted students' dropping out of high school, only parent characteristics predicted students' graduating from high school. Again, school type did not appear to influence whether or not a student will graduate from high school. Parents play an extremely influential role in their children's academic success.

Parent Survey of Renewing and Attrition Families

The BASIC Fund's only criteria for admission is financial need. The program has not collected detailed information about other characteristics of BASIC Fund families, such as those listed above that may be factors predicting high school graduation. Because the BASIC Fund is concerned with its impact on the student and the family continuing through high school graduation, we sought to determine through a parent survey which of the above predictive factors might be present in current BASIC Fund families. If the BASIC Fund is currently serving families with already high levels of factors predictive of high school graduation, it would be difficult to assert that the BASIC Fund support alone is the factor leading to a student's graduation from high school. However, if the BASIC Fund families do not already have high levels of these predictive factors, there is an argument to be made that the BASIC Fund makes a difference by compensating in some way for their absence.

We also surveyed parents who participated in the BASIC Fund in 2006-2007, and who will *not* be renewing their participation. We sought to understand their reasons for leaving the program.

We received return surveys from 224 current BASIC Fund families who will be renewing their participation next year (renewal families), and 71 surveys from families who will leave the program (attrition families). The following table describes the respondents in more detail.

Table 7: Parent Survey: Description of Respondents

	Renewal Families	Attrition Families
Language of Survey		
English	73%	83%
Spanish	27%	17%
Respondent		
Mother	83%	90%
Father	13%	3%
Grandparent	1%	5%
Other	3%	2%
Sample Size	224	71

We analyzed the parent survey data to determine the presence or absence of factors predictive of high school graduation culled from the literature review.

- ✓ Predictors of *Not* Graduating

Family Factors

Family Stress: A majority (58%) of BASIC Fund families have experienced at least one major stressor in the past year, and 12% of families experienced two to four stressors. The most common stressors (each experienced by 12 to 16% of families) are illness or death in the family; job loss; divorce or separation; and moving.

Table 8: Family Stressors Experienced in the Past Year[a]

	Renewal Families	Attrition Families
Job loss	16%	15%
Illness or death	16%	13%
Family moved	12%	24%
Parents separated or divorced	13%	24%
Another adult left the household	7%	6%
Parent(s) married	4%	6%
Another adult joined the household	4%	7%
Money problems other than job loss	2%	3%
Sibling born	1%	3%
Other stress	1%	1%
School change (including siblings attending different schools)	1%	3%
Housing problems (including fire and homelessness)	1%	1%
Average number of stressors[b] *(Range: 0-4)*	*0.8*	*1.1*

Notes:
a. Families were allowed to report as many stressors as applied to their situation.
b. The difference between Attrition and Renewal Families is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Low Parent Education: Four percent of parents neither graduated high school nor earned GED. Sixteen percent have a GED. Nineteen percent have no schooling beyond high school. Eighteen percent graduated from a 4-year college. There were no differences in the education levels of parents in renewal and attrition families.

Table 9: Respondent[a] Education Levels

	Percentage
Attended high school[a]	9%
Graduated high school	10%
Attended trade school	3%
Graduated trade school	8%
Attended two-year college	26%
Graduated two-year college	10%
Attended four-year college or university	14%
Graduated four-year college or university	11%
Attended graduate school	2%
Graduated graduate school	7%
Total	*100%*

Notes:

a. There was no difference between the education levels of Renewal and Attrition family respondents.

b. 4% of respondents neither graduated high school nor earned a GED.

Other family factors we explored included number of siblings, and number of elementary schools previously attended, an indicator of family transiency. Forty-five percent of students have two or more siblings, and 29% attended two or more elementary schools before their current private school.

Individual Behavior Factors

School Behavior: Overall, twenty-four percent of renewing parents reported that their child has had a behavior problem at school in the last year. Overall, 7% of students had repeated a grade, and 2% had failed a subject (without repeating a grade). Interestingly, once students enter the private schools, there is an increased likelihood that the school will report a behavior problem, or that the student will repeat a grade. This trend is most likely because the private schools have more strict enforcement of their behavior policies, and more rigorous academic standards.

Table 10: Comparison of Child Risks in Public and Private School[a]

	All Renewal Families	Previous Public School	Current Private School	Statistical Significance
School reported behavior problem	24%	14%	31%	$p < .01$
Student failed a subject (without repeating a grade level)	2%	2%	3%	—
Student repeated a grade level	7%	1%	10%	$p < .05$
Sample size	*224*	*105*	*119*	—

Notes:

a. Half of Renewal families were asked whether any of the following had happened in the past year when the student was in the current public school. The other half of Renewal families were asked about the student's last year in the previous public school.

✓ Predictors of *Graduating*

We also explored the family factors, such as parent aspirations for future schooling, that might predict high school graduation. Less than half (43%) of BASIC Fund parents surveyed reported that they expect their children to go to private high school. A high percentage (86%) of parents believe that the cost of tuition will be a barrier. Twenty-nine percent of parents anticipate two or more barriers to sending their children to private high school.

Table 11: Perceived Obstacles to Sending Child to Private High School

	Percentage
No obstacles	11%
Cost	86%
Don't know how to find good private high school	15%
Transportation is difficult	11%
Child's grades	9%
Good public school is available	8%
Average number of obstacles (Range: 0-5 reasons)	*1.3*

Note: Families were allowed to report as many obstacles as they perceived. There was not a statistically significant difference in the number of obstacles perceived by Renewal and Attrition families.

Not necessarily a factor predicting high school graduation, but an indicator of student enrichment, BASIC Fund students have more access to extracurricular activities than they did previously. Now that children are in private school, 43% of children go to extra classes and activities during the school year, significantly more than when they were in public school (20%).

Attrition Family Survey

We asked 190 families leaving the BASIC Fund to let us know their reasons. Seventy-one families responded. A breakdown of the response rate is below.

Table 12: Attrition Family Response Rate Details

	Number of Families	Percentage
Surveys Completed	71	37%
Refused to Respond by Phone[a]	14	7%
Invalid Contact Information	26	14%
No Response to Mail and Phone	79	42%
Total Surveys Mailed	190	100%

Notes:
a. The family member agreed to do the survey on-line, but did not do so.

The most common reasons families cited for leaving the program included:

- Inability to afford tuition even with BASIC Fund help (38% of Attrition Families)
- Moving (23%);
- Child not liking the private school (18%)
- Parent not liking the private school (11%)

Fewer than 10% of Families reported the following reasons:

- No longer qualifying for BASIC Fund assistance
- Public schools providing services for special needs
- Receiving tuition assistance directly from a private school
- Private school was too challenging
- Discipline problems
- Difficulty with BASIC Fund paperwork

Table 13: Reasons for Attrition

	Percentage
Could not afford, even with BASIC FUND help	38%
Family moved	23%
Parent did not like private school	18%
Child did not like private school	11%
Child needed special services that were available at public school	7%
No longer qualified for BASIC FUND support	7%
School was too hard	4%
Received better tuition assistance directly from school	4%
Discipline issues	3%
BASIC FUND paperwork was too difficult	3%
Chose to homeschool	1%
School moved	1%
Average number of reasons (Range: 0-3 reasons)	*1.2*

Note: Families were allowed to report as many reasons as applied to their situation.

Based on responses to the stressful-event items on the survey, it is also clear that attrition families reported significantly more stressful events in the past year than renewal families, especially that the family had moved, or a divorce or separation had occurred.

Recommendations for Future Data Collection: We do not recommend that the BASIC Fund invest in further parent surveys at this time, unless a particular need for information presents itself. However, exit interviews conducted by phone with families leaving the BASIC Fund are very useful, and will allow the BASIC Fund to continue to understand the needs of its target population. Rather than a survey, BASIC Fund staff can simply ask families over the phone at the time of exit what their top reason is for leaving, and record the information in the existing database.

Conclusion

As suggested above, it is most likely that the *interaction* between school setting, individual student characteristics, and family characteristics is more predictive of student success in school than any of these factors considered alone. It is likely that BASIC Fund families are more motivated than average public school parents to help their children academically, but it does not follow that family motivation alone, in the absence of parent education and higher socio-economic status, is enough to predict academic success for their children. Survey results show that the BASIC Fund is recruiting families *without* high levels of parent education, or even the highest levels of aspiration for their child's future schooling, and enabling these families to access educational settings where these potential drawbacks may be mitigated by high expectations for student performance, a higher-achieving peer group, and more strict enforcement of academic and behavioral standards. Taken together, the data collected in this evaluation aligns well to suggest that the BASIC Fund is not only providing more educational choice for parents, but is also improving children's academic performance in elementary school, and creating lasting educational effects that carry through to high school graduation.

Recommendations for Further Evaluation

This evaluation was initially conceived as a three-year research effort, to determine the longitudinal effects of BASIC Fund support. In only one year, however, we have been able to obtain sufficient longitudinal data by altering our approach to ask for data on *all* BASIC Fund students for all the years they have participated, instead of taking snapshots of particular grade levels. While additional longitudinal data would be interesting, we do not believe it is essential for the BASIC Fund to continue analyzing this data at this time. We recommend that the program make data collection of student scores and graduation rates a regular part of doing business, and that these data are reviewed and analyzed by an outside contractor every three years.

http://www.manhattan-institute.org/cgi-bin/apMI/print.cgi

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The Effect of School Choice:an Evaluation of the Charlotte Children's Scholarship Fund

Jay P. Greene
Senior Fellow, The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research

Executive Summary

Does providing low-income families vouchers or scholarships with which they can select a private school improve student achievement? The evidence from the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) program in Charlotte suggests that providing low-income families with scholarships has significant benefits for those families. This finding is consistent with the results from similar evaluations of scholarship programs in New York, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio as well as the results of evaluations of publicly funded school choice programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland.

The main findings from this evaluation of the Charlotte CSF Program are:

- Receiving a scholarship to attend private school improves scores on standardized math tests by between 5.9 and 6.2 national percentile ranking points, depending on the type of analysis performed.
- Receiving a scholarship to attend a private school improves scores on standardized reading tests by between 5.4 and 7.7 national percentile ranking points, depending on the type of analysis performed.
- Parents were asked to assign their child's school a letter grade, A through F. Nearly twice as many choice parents gave their child's school an A (53%), compared to the public school parents (26%). Choice parents were also nearly twice as likely to report being "very satisfied" with virtually all aspects of their children's school: location, safety, teaching quality, course content, class size, facilities, student respect for teachers, information on student progress, religious observance, parental support for school, discipline, clarity of school goals, teamwork among staff, teaching moral values, academic quality, and teacher respect for students.
- Roughly two in five students would give their choice school an A compared to 32% of public school students. When students were asked how they feel about going to school each day, 24% of the public school students said that they did not want to go compared to 9% of choice students. And 24% of non-scholarship

students agreed that they did not feel safe at school compared to 9% of choice students.

- Parental reports confirm student perceptions about safety at school. More than a third of public school parents reported problems with fighting in school (36%) compared to 16% of choice parents. One-quarter of public school parents reported problems with racial conflict compared to 12% of choice parents. 22% of public school parents reported problems with guns or weapons at their children's elementary schools compared to 11% of choice parents. And 25% of public school parents reported problems with destruction of property at school compared to 12% of choice parents.
- Because the private schools examined operate with far less money per pupil than do the public schools, it is not surprising to discover that the private schools have more sparse facilities and fewer services to offer. For example, only 70% of choice parents described their school as having a library compared to 90% of the public school parents. Only 63% of choice parents said that their school had a gym compared to 91% of public school parents. Only 71% of choice parents said that their school had a cafeteria compared to 89% of public school parents. Parents also reported fewer school services at the private schools. Only 18% of choice parents said that their school had a program for students learning to speak English compared to 50% of public school parents. Only 49% of choice parents said that their school had a program for learning disabilities compared to 71% of public school parents. Only 51% of choice parents reported programs for gifted students at their schools compared to 72% of public school parents. Choice parents were also less likely to report that their school had a counselor, nurse, music program, art program, or prepared lunches.

The Charlotte CSF Program successfully targeted disadvantaged families. In general, choice schools were accepting students with scholarships who were considerably more disadvantaged than typical students in Charlotte. Three-quarters of the choice students were African-American, while a little more than one-third of all students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district are African-American. As of 1990 the average family income in Charlotte was nearly $34,000, almost $10,000 more than the average family income of choice students 10 years later. Almost one-third (32%) of choice families report that they receive some kind of public assistance, such as food stamps or welfare, while the 1990 census reports that only 5% of households in Charlotte were on public assistance. And even after one year of the scholarship, choice students were still scoring well below the national average on standardized tests (although they were scoring significantly better than they would have had they not received the scholarship). There is no evidence to support the claim that the private schools were "creaming" the best students or "dumping" those students whom they found undesirable.

The private schools accepting scholarship students were smaller and had smaller class sizes, on average, than the public schools. But small class size does not "explain" the higher student achievement observed in private schools. Adding class size to the multivariate model predicting student test scores shows that class size has no effect on student achievement in our sample.

The Effect of School Choice: An Evaluation of the Charlotte Children's Scholarship Fund Program

Introduction

Does providing low-income families vouchers or scholarships with which they can select a private school improve student achievement?1 The evidence from the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) program in Charlotte suggests that providing low-income families with scholarships has significant benefits for those families. This finding is consistent with the results from similar evaluations of scholarship programs in New York, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio as well as the results of evaluations of publicly funded school choice programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland. The findings of those studies have been summarized and discussed elsewhere.2 This report will focus on presenting the results from Charlotte.

Research Design

The CSF program offered partial scholarships to low-income families in Charlotte with a maximum value of $1,700 to attend private schools in the 1999-2000 academic year. To ration limited funds, scholarships were awarded by lottery to families that had completed an application process. This study examined only students enrolled in grades 2 through 8. In that age group, 388 students had been awarded scholarships by lottery and were enrolled in private school, 342 students were not offered scholarships by lottery, and 413 students had won the lottery to receive a scholarship but did not enroll in private school. All of these students and their parents were sent invitations to attend four testing sessions on a Saturday or Sunday between March 18 and April 30, 2000, where parents completed surveys while students took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills survey version. Older students also completed a survey.

Families whose children were not using scholarships were offered $20 and an opportunity to win a new scholarship as incentives to participate and to defray the transportation and other expenses involved. Families whose children were using scholarships were simply asked to participate without compensation. Despite these relatively modest incentives, our response rate was quite good. Of the 1,143 students who were sent invitations to attend a testing session, 452, or 40%, participated in the study. The participation rate among the students who won the lottery and were using scholarships, whom we will call "choice students," was 53%. The participation rate among the students who applied but failed to win a scholarship in the lottery, whom we will call "control students," was 49%. The participation rate among the students who won a scholarship but did not use it to attend a private school, whom we will call "non-complying students," was 20%.

Various explanations account for the level of participation. The contact information available for all students was over a year old. Given the high mobility of urban, low-income populations, it is likely that many invitations never reached their target. In

addition, we only offered four testing opportunities on Saturdays or Sundays, which may not have accommodated the work and social schedules of a number of families. Other factors that may have influenced participation include transportation issues, family motivation, and student cooperation with sacrificing a weekend day to take a standardized test.

These obstacles to participation were obviously most severe among the group that we call non-complying students. Many of those families did not use the scholarship that was offered to them because they moved, exacerbating the difficulty of inviting them to participate in this study. Other students who were offered scholarships but did not use them (and thus did not "comply" with a lottery research design), may have declined the scholarships because they obtained access to a desired public school, such as a magnet school or other public school choice program. If these students were doing well in their public school they would have little reason to participate in the study where the primary incentive was the opportunity to win a private school scholarship. Other students may not have used a scholarship that was offered because they were unable to find a satisfactory private school. Yet other students did not use a scholarship that was offered because their families did not have the financial resources to pay the tuition charges above the $1,700 value of the scholarship. Families that do not believe that they will be able to use a new scholarship are unlikely to be enticed by an offer of a scholarship to participate in the study.

Non-compliance and non-participation are issues in all evaluations, including random-assignment or lottery based studies, such as this evaluation and most medical studies. People are always free to cease cooperating with researchers and they are always free to refuse the treatment they are offered. Lotteries in research do not ensure identical treatment and control groups, but they certainly help get closer to achieving comparable groups than other methods of selecting subjects. To the extent that non-compliance and non-participation produce non-identical treatment and control groups, the differences can be adjusted statistically with little difficulty, as was done in this study.

Comparability of Groups

All applicants for scholarships were asked to provide their family income at the time of application. More complete demographic information was collected during the testing sessions, but, as noted, not all applicants participated in the study. By looking at the income information provided at the time of application we can see a number of things: 1) the lottery produced two groups that were not significantly different in income (this helps confirm that the lottery was properly conducted); 2) those applicants who participated in the study had somewhat higher incomes than those that did not; and 3) the differences between the incomes of study participants and non-participants are roughly equal for lottery winners and lottery losers as well as for choice, control, and non-complying students. In other words, while those who participated in our study differed somewhat from those who did not, those differences do not appear to have biased the comparability of our groups.

The family income of applicants who won the lottery to be offered a scholarship was $23,449 compared to $23,689 for those who lost the lottery. The difference in income is not statistically significant, helping to confirm that the lottery was fairly conducted. The family income of students who participated in the study was $25,313, which is significantly different from the $22,441 reported at the time of application for those families who did not later participate in testing. This gap of roughly $3,000 between participants and non-participants exists among those who won the lottery (combining the choice and non-complying students) as well as among those who were in the control group. Lottery winners who participated in the study had average family incomes of $25,323, while lottery winners who did not participate had average family incomes of $22,517. Control group students who participated in the study had average family incomes of $25,297, while control group students who did not participate had average family incomes of $22,215. Whatever factors influenced participation in the study appear to have operated equally on lottery winners and lottery losers.

This claim is further supported by the demographic similarity of the treatment and control groups who participated in the study and completed our survey. As can be seen in Table 1, the lottery winners and losers who participated in the study did not differ from each other very much in their demographic characteristics. The control group had slightly better educated mothers, but the difference was not significant, while those offered a scholarship were more likely to have mothers born outside of the United States. Those offered scholarships were more likely to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for a family disability, while control group mothers were more likely to work outside of the home. All of these differences are modest and we can expect some significant differences to be produced by chance when comparing a large number of demographic characteristics. The overall picture is that despite non-participation in our study, we managed to preserve the similarity of the lottery winners and losers.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Lottery Winners and Losers

Variable	Lottery Winners	Lottery Losers	Significance
Mother's Education (11 point scale)	6.9	7.8	0.23
Mother U.S. Born	89%	96%	0.02
Attend Religious Services (5 point scale)	3.3	3.4	0.44
Receive Food Stamps	19%	19%	0.99
Receive Welfare	28%	24%	0.41
Receive Social Security	13%	11%	0.44
Receive Supplemental Security Income	28%	15%	0.01
Receive HUD Housing Vouchers	2%	5%	0.19
Family Income (from application)	$25,323	$25,297	0.97
Family Income (from survey)	$23,150	$24,800	0.14
Children in Household	2.4	2.2	0.12
Family Member in Jail	2%	1%	0.88
Student Has Physical Handicap	3%	1%	0.25
Student Has Learning Disability	9%	11%	0.55
Student is a Native English Speaker	97%	97%	0.77
African-American Mother	81%	80%	0.75
Two Parent Household	36%	33%	0.53

Male Student	49%	41%	0.1
Year of Mother's Birth	1962	1963	0.28
Mother Employed Full-Time	60%	68%	0.03
Mother Single, Never Married	27%	29%	0.14
Mother is Baptist	38%	42%	0.96
N	206-267	135-161	

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

But we are not primarily interested in comparing outcomes of lottery winners to lottery losers. That is, our primary interest is in identifying the effect of *using* a scholarship to attend private school, not the effect of being *offered* a scholarship even if one does not use it. We therefore want to compare choice students to the other groups. As can be seen in Table 2, choice students differ from the other two groups of students (control and non-complying) whom we are calling "public" students. Even though some of the differences are statistically significant, the substantive differences are modest. The overall picture is of the choice students and comparison groups being quite similar, although clearly not identical.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Choice and Public School Students

Variable	Choice	Public	Significance
Mother's Education (11 point scale)	7.1	7.3	0.75
Mother U.S. Born	88%	94%	0.02
Attend Religious Services (5 point scale)	3.4	3.2	0.08
Receive Food Stamps	13%	22%	0.03
Receive Welfare	6%	9%	0.26
Receive Social Security	13%	12%	0.79
Receive Supplemental Security Income	7%	6%	0.87
Receive HUD Housing Vouchers	1%	5%	0.07
Family Income (from application)	$26,084	$24,714	0.24
Family Income (from survey)	$23,450	$23,850	0.88
Children in Household	2.4	2.2	0.12
Family Member in Jail	1%	2%	0.15
Student Has Physical Handicap	3%	2%	0.72
Student Has Learning Disability	4%	13%	0.00
Student is a Native English Speaker	98%	97%	0.45
African-American Mother	76%	85%	0.04
Two Parent Household	42%	29%	0.01
Male Student	49%	44%	0.34
Year of Mother's Birth	1961	1963	0.01
Mother Employed Full-Time	51%	73%	0.00
Mother Single, Never Married	23%	31%	0.00
Mother is Baptist	33%	45%	0.00
N	145-189	197-239	

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

We employ two strategies in this study for comparing the outcomes of choice students to those of the other groups. The first strategy employs what is called a quasi-experimental

research design in which observed differences between the groups that are theoretically expected to be related to the outcomes are controlled statistically.3 Because the groups are already very similar, we have less reason to fear that *unobserved* differences between the groups bias our estimates of the effect of using a scholarship. Concern about the unobserved differences between families that send their children to public and private schools has always limited our ability to draw conclusions from comparisons of the outcomes of students enrolled in public and private schools. Even after controlling for observed demographic differences, researchers could always wonder whether unobserved differences that were not being controlled statistically, such as parental motivation or the intellectual richness of home life, actually accounted for the differences in student outcomes instead of the schools.

In our case, however, the application process and lottery have produced groups for comparison that are already quite similar on observed as well as (in all likelihood) unobserved characteristics. All families had to be sufficiently motivated to complete an application for a scholarship. All families had to be low-income to qualify for a scholarship. A lottery was used to select who would be offered scholarships, creating, as we have confirmed, two groups that were nearly identical. While non-compliance and non-participation have caused the groups we are comparing to stray from being identical in their background characteristics, they are still quite similar so that controlling for observed characteristics is likely to produce results in which we can have high confidence.

The second strategy to identify the effect of using a scholarship is to use the lottery as an "instrument" to estimate who uses the scholarships that are offered.4 That is, we first predict who will use a scholarship, using whether someone won the lottery to help us make that prediction, and then we determine whether the students we predict used a scholarship have better outcomes. By using the predicted users of scholarships rather than the actual users, we remove the bias that may be introduced by the fact that the students who used the vouchers may differ (in unobserved ways) from the students who were offered a voucher but did not use them. Our estimated scholarship users will be nearly identical in their background characteristics to the groups against which we are comparing them. This technique, known as an instrumental analysis or a two-stage Heckman analysis, is a widely used strategy among economists that can produce very reliable findings.

Test Score Outcomes

Using these two strategies we can estimate the benefit of receiving a scholarship to attend a private school in Charlotte on student standardized test scores after one year. Using the quasi-experimental technique, we compute the effect of using a scholarship controlling for a host of background characteristics, including mother's education, mother's race, family income, two-parent household, and sex of student. These background characteristics are widely thought to be strongly related to student achievement in education research.5 We could control for additional background characteristics, but we

would lose additional students from our analyses due to the fact that not all parents completed all questions on their surveys without gaining much explanatory power.

The benefit of receiving a scholarship on students' math scores is 5.9 percentile points at the end of the first year (see Table 3). The benefit of using a scholarship to attend a private school on reading scores is 6.5 percentile points after one year. Gains in both math and reading are statistically significant at the conventional $p < .05$ level.

Table 3: The Effect of Attending a Private School with a Scholarship on Test Scores

The Effect of Attending a Private School with a Scholarship on Math Scores

	Quasi-Experimental		Instrumental w/o background controls		Instrumental w/ background controls	
Variable	**Effect**	**Significance**	**Effect**	**Significance**	**Effect**	**Significance**
Choice	5.9	0.04	6.1	0.01	6.2	0.10
African-American Mother	-13.5	0.00			-13.4	0.00
Mother's Education	2.4	0.00			2.4	0.00
Family Income (in $5,000 increments)	2.0	0.01			2.0.01 0	
Two-Parent Household	2.8	0.40			2.6	0.44
Male Student	0.4	0.86			0.4	0.87
Non-Complying Student	0.7	0.85				
Constant	10.3	0.09	29.1	0.00	10.3	0.10
N	357		436		357	
Adjusted R-Square	0.14		0.01		0.14	

The Effect of Attending a Private School with a Scholarship on Reading Scores

	Quasi-Experimental		Instrumental w/o background controls		Instrumental w/ background controls	
Variable	**Effect**	**Significance**	**Effect**	**Significance**	**Effect**	**Significance**
Choice	6.5	0.03	5.4	0.00	7.7	0.05
African-American Mother	-11.0	0.00			-10.7	0.00
Mother's Education	2.8	0.00			2.7	0.00
Family Income (in $5,000 increments)	1.6	0.06			1.7	0.05
Two-Parent Household	10.0	0.01			9.3	0.01
Male Student	-5.7	0.04			-5.7	0.04
Non-Complying Student	3.3	0.42				
Constant	13.0	0.04	34.7	0.04	12.8	0.05

N	357	436	357
Adjusted R-Square	0.17	0.01	0.17

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

When using the instrumental analysis it is arguable that it is not necessary to control for background characteristics because we have re-captured the nearly identical comparison groups produced by the lottery to award scholarships. The advantage of not controlling for any background characteristics is that we avoid losing any cases due to missing data from the parent surveys. An instrumental analysis without controlling for any background characteristics shows the benefit of using a scholarship to be 6.1 percentile points for math and 5.4 percentile points for reading. Both results are statistically significant.

The estimated effect of using a scholarship from the instrumental analysis increases somewhat if we add controls for background characteristics, although we do lose nearly 100 cases because of missing data on one or more variable. The benefit of receiving a scholarship on math scores in this analysis is 6.2 percentile points, while the benefit for reading is 7.7 percentile points. The math effect is statistically significant at $p < .1$ and the reading effect is significant at $p < .05$.

The test score results across these analyses are consistently positive and significant. Having access to a private school with a scholarship improves student performance on standardized test scores by between 5.4 and 7.7 percentile points for math and reading after only one year's time. On average, a scholarship makes the difference between students scoring in the low 30s and the high 30s. This gain is fairly large. Using within sample variance, the benefit is approximately .25 standard deviations for math and reading, which education researchers generally consider large. To put the gain in perspective, the difference between minority and white students nationwide is approximately 1 standard deviation. The benefits observed from the Charlotte CSF program are roughly one-quarter as large at the end of the first year.

Parental and Student Satisfaction

Another important indicator of the benefit of a program on students is how parents describe those benefits. While parents' judgments may be distorted by the desire to affirm their decision, parents are particularly well-positioned to assess effects on their own children given how much more contextual information they have about how their children are doing. According to parents, having a scholarship to attend private school is clearly beneficial. Parents were asked to assign their child's school a letter grade, A through F. Nearly twice as many choice parents gave their child's school an A (53%), compared to the public school parents (26%). (See Table 4) Choice parents were also much more likely to report being "very satisfied" with virtually all aspects of their children's school: location, safety, teaching quality, course content, class size, facilities, student respect for teachers, information on student progress, religious observance, parental support for school, discipline, clarity of school goals, teamwork among staff, teaching moral values, academic quality, and teacher respect for students.

Table 4: Parental Satisfaction

Variable	Choice	Public	Significance
Would Give School an A	53%	26%	0.00
Percentage Very Satisfied With…			
School Location	47%	29%	0.00
School Safety	58%	32%	0.00
Teaching Quality	54%	27%	0.00
What is Taught	64%	33%	0.00
Class Size	61%	24%	0.00
Facilities	53%	25%	0.00
Students Respect Teachers	61%	31%	0.00
Information on Student Progress	60%	29%	0.00
Observe Religion	65%	25%	0.00
Parental Support for School	58%	27%	0.00
Discipline	53%	30%	0.00
Clarity of School Goals	50%	25%	0.00
Teamwork Among Staff	54%	26%	0.00
Teaching Values	62%	27%	0.00
Academic Quality	55%	27%	0.00
Teachers Respect Students	58%	26%	0.00
N	185-190	231-242	

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

The older students who completed a survey during the testing sessions similarly reported significantly more positive assessments of their private school than did those students who did not receive a scholarship. Roughly two in five students would give their choice school an A compared to 32% of public school students. (See Table 5) When students were asked how they feel about going to school each day 24% of the public school students said that they did not want to go compared to 9% of choice students. And 24% of non-scholarship students agreed that they did not feel safe at school compared to 9% of choice students.

Table 5: Student Assessments of Schools

Variable	Choice	Public	Significance
Would Give School an A	40%	32%	0.05
Do Not Want to Go to School	9%	24%	0.00
Do Not Feel Safe at School	9%	24%	0.03
Strongly Agree that…			
Teachers are Interested in Students	52%	28%	0.00
Teachers Listen	44%	26%	0.01
Teaches are Fair	35%	22%	0.00
Agree that…			
Students Get Along with Teachers	66%	38%	0.00

N	96-98	107-109	

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

Parental reports confirm student perceptions about safety at school. More than a third of public school parents reported problems with fighting in school (36%) compared to 16% of choice parents. (See Table 6) One-quarter of public school parents reported problems with racial conflict compared to 12% of choice parents. 22% of public school parents reported problems with guns or weapons at their children's elementary schools compared to 11% of choice parents. And 25% of public school parents reported problems with destruction of property at school compared to 12% of choice parents.

Table 6: Parent Description of School:
Percentage Reporting Problems are Somewhat or Very Serious

Variable	Choice	Public	Significance
Fighting	16%	36%	0.00
Racial Conflict	12%	25%	0.00
Guns or Weapons at School	11%	22%	0.00
Destroying Property	12%	25%	0.00
Cheating	16%	36%	0.00
Cutting Classes	15%	26%	0.01
Tardiness	23%	33%	0.08
N	185-188	233-238	

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

School Facilities and Services

Given the overwhelmingly positive description of the choice schools and given the test score improvements, one might expect that the private schools are simply more luxurious schools with better resources. Far from it. Most of the private schools at which students used scholarships operate on nearly half as much money per pupil as do the public schools. Tuition at most of the private schools is well below $3,000 and additional fundraising brings no more than a few hundred dollars per student.

With far less money it is not surprising to discover that the private schools have more sparse facilities and fewer services to offer. For example, only 70% of choice parents described their school as having a library compared to 90% of the public school parents. (See Table 7) Only 63% of choice parents said that their school had a gym compared to 91% of public school parents. Only 71% of choice parents said that their school had a cafeteria compared to 89% of public school parents. Parents also reported fewer school services at the private schools. Only 18% of choice parents said that their school had a program for students learning to speak English compared to 50% of public school parents. Only 49% of choice parents said that their school had a program for learning disabilities compared to 71% of public school p arents. Only 51% of choice parents

reported program for gifted students at their schools compared to 72% of public school parents. Choice parents were also less likely to report that their school had a counselor, nurse, music program, art program, and prepared lunches.

Table 7: Parent Description of School Facilities and Services

Variable	Choice	Public	Significance
Computer Lab	80%	85%	0.23
Library	67%	90%	0.00
Gym	63%	91%	0.00
Cafeteria	71%	89%	0.00
Program for Non-English Speakers	18%	50%	0.00
Individual Tutors	64%	64%	0.92
Program for Learning Disabilities	49%	71%	0.00
Program for Gifted Students	51%	72%	0.00
School Counselor	66%	83%	0.00
Nurse	46%	79%	0.00
Music Program	85%	93%	0.01
Art Program	68%	79%	0.02
After-School Program	92%	83%	0.00
Prepared Lunch	74%	92%	0.00
N	125-185	130-240	

Significance below .05 is conventionally considered statistically significant.

There were some things that were equally or more available at choice schools. For example, choice and public schools were roughly equally likely to have a computer lab. And choice schools were equally likely to offer individual tutors and more likely to offer after-school programs. When parents report that they are more satisfied with the choice school facilities, they clearly must be focusing on these features that they believe are more important. Choice schools appear to have far fewer resources but to concentrate those resources on providing the facilities and services that parents value most.

What Might Account for Choice School Success?

If the private schools are not better funded and do not have nicer facilities and services by objective standards, why do parents like them so much? The most obvious answer is that parents like the choice schools because their children are learning more. But what might account for this better student achievement? While this study is not designed to address this question fully, it is possible to speculate based on the evidence that was collected. Some of the most important differences between the choice and public schools pertain to the quality and motivation of teachers in the two sectors. As we have already seen, parents give very strong marks to the quality of instruction at the choice schools. Interestingly, so do the students. Students are almost twice as likely to report that teachers at choice schools are “interested in students” than are public school students. (See Table

5) Choice students are also significantly more likely to report that their teachers listen to students, that teachers are fair, and that students get along with teachers.

Despite having less money for teacher salaries and benefits, private schools appear to be better able to recruit quality teachers and dismiss bad ones. They may attract more quality teachers because they can offer positive working conditions, an organization with a clear sense of mission, and greater autonomy in the classroom. Layers of bureaucratic regulations and control in the public schools, perhaps a by-product of political governance of the schools, makes it difficult for public schools to maintain positive working conditions, agree on a clear mission, or provide autonomy in the classroom. Importantly, school district and union rules also make the removal of bad teachers much more difficult in public schools than in private schools.

Choice and public schools also differ in their overall size and in their average class size. The median choice student is enrolled in a school that has between 151 and 300 students. The median public school student is in a school that has between 451 and 600 students. The median choice student is in a class that has between 11 and 15 students, while the median public school student is in a class with between 21 and 25 students. Education researchers are increasingly recognizing that there may be diseconomies of scale in education.6 That is, smaller school districts tend to do better than larger school districts, smaller school buildings tend to do better than larger school buildings, and smaller classrooms may do better than larger classrooms. Smallness may permit the development of a sense of community and common purpose, which may be key to school success. And smallness obviates the need for rigid rules that restrict the autonomy of principals and teachers.

Some critics of school choice suggest that small classes in private schools "explain" the achievement benefits of voucher and private scholarship programs. If only public schools were provided with additional resources to reduce class size, they too could improve achievement. This, of course, begs the question: why have the private schools with fewer resources been able to produce significantly smaller classes than public schools? And what assurance is there that additional funds for public schools will lead to reduced class size and not to higher paid teachers or more non-teaching staff?

Interestingly, adding class size to the model in Table 3 that estimates student achievement shows that class size is not significantly related to student achievement in our sample. In other words, class size does not "explain" the achievement benefits of receiving a scholarship to attend private school in Charlotte.

In addition, one should not attempt to explain *why* private schools appear to outperform public schools while attempting to estimate *whether* private schools outperform public schools. By analogy, if we want to know whether the Cubs or Yankees are better baseball teams, we should not control for pitching, hitting, and fielding. Pitching, hitting, and fielding may help explain why one team is better than another, but they should not be considered when assessing whether one team is better than another. Similarly, when we are addressing whether students do better when they have access to a private school with

a scholarship we should not attempt to control for those factors that may help explain why private schools may be better.

Creaming and Dumping

Another prominent explanation for private school success is that private schools are able to select their students by skimming off the cream of students and dumping the undesirable students. In truth, public schools can also be selective. Some magnet and other public school programs have academic or racial criteria for admission. And students whom the public schools decide they cannot educate properly are sometimes sent to other public schools or to private schools at public expense. Not every public school is obligated to accept every student.

In our sample we saw little evidence to suggest that private schools were creaming the best students and dumping the worst. First, almost no private schools were administering admissions tests to select academically advantaged students. Families who were unable to get their children into the schools they desired were asked to provide the reasons for their inability to gain access to those schools. More than three-fifths of these families cited financial constraints as blocking their access to a desired school. According to parental reports only two students out of all of the students offered a scholarship failed to gain admission to a private school because of an admissions test.

Second, there is no evidence that private schools expelled undesirable students or asked them not to return. Parents of students who did not complete the year at the same private school were asked to describe the reason for their switch. Not one reported that they switched schools because their child was expelled. And of those parents who reported that they might not return to the same school next year not one reported that their child was asked not to return. In short, there is virtually no evidence that the choice schools academically screened their students for admission or expelled or "counseled out" students they found undesirable.

Parents were also asked whether their children had any physical handicaps, learning disabilities, or issues learning to speak English. Very few reported physical handicaps, only 3% of choice students and 2% of public school parents. Similarly low percentages of choice and public school parents reported that English was not their child's native language. However, choice parents reported fewer children with learning disabilities (4%) than did public school parents (13%). As we have already observed, given their lower level of funding fewer private schools offer special programs for learning disabilities. This difference in the percentage of students with learning disabilities may also be partially explained by differing incentives in the public and private schools to label students as having learning disabilities. Public schools obtain additional resources for students labeled as learning-disabled and may be able to exempt learning-disabled students from accountability testing.

While this difference in learning disabled students at choice and public schools is significant, it is not necessarily evidence of creaming or dumping. It may be evidence of

parental choice. Parents of children with special needs are more likely to choose schools that have additional funds to offer programs that address those special needs. A fair test of whether private schools are avoiding learning disabled students would compare the rates of learning disabilities when private schools are given the same additional resources to serve those children as the public schools receive. In the absence of such a test, this evidence on learning disabilities is ambiguous.

In general, choice schools were accepting students with scholarships who were considerably more disadvantaged than typical students in Charlotte. Three-quarters of the choice students were African-American, while a little more than one-third of all students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district are African-American.7 As of 1990 the average family income in Charlotte was nearly $34,000, almost $10,000 more than the average family income of choice students 10 years later. Almost one-third (32%) of choice families report that they receive some kind of public assistance, such as food stamps or welfare, while the 1990 census reports that only 5% of households in Charlotte were on public assistance. And even after one year of the scholarship, choice students were still scoring well below the national average on standardized tests (although they were scoring significantly better than they would have had they not received the scholarship).

It takes some doing to suggest that the scholarship families that enrolled in private school are the cream when those families are more likely to be African-American, low income, on public assistance, and score below-average on test scores than typical families in Charlotte or the United States. It is clear that the CSF program in Charlotte is successfully targeting disadvantaged students. While it may not reach the most severely disadvantaged, just as Food Stamps or housing vouchers do not always reach the most disadvantaged, the scholarship program is clearly offering opportunities to families that lack them. And it is also clear that the private schools are taking on these disadvantaged students, not creaming off the best and dumping the worst.

Implications for School Choice Policies

The privately-funded scholarship program in Charlotte differs from what a publicly-funded school choice program would likely be in a number of respects. First, the scholarship had a low monetary value and always required a significant co-payment from the family toward tuition. A publicly-funded voucher would likely be worth considerably more money and would require little if any co-payment from the receiving families. This difference may alter the benefit we would expect to see from gaining access to private schools. The additional money a publicly-funded voucher would provide to private schools might increase the expected benefit, but the reduced co-payment from families might alter the characteristics of participating families and reduce the benefit.

Second, privately-funded scholarships place little or no regulation on the activities of private schools, while publicly-funded vouchers would likely carry with them more regulation. That regulation might improve the benefits of the program by ensuring equal

access and the provision of consumer information, but regulation might also reduce the benefits of the program by encumbering schools.

Third, the CSF scholarship program was small enough so that its recipients could be accommodated by spare capacity in existing private schools. A larger, publicly-funded school choice program would require the addition of new private schools. The outcomes in new private schools might be better or worse than that observed in existing schools.

There is no way of addressing these issues fully without attempting additional publicly-funded programs on a larger scale. The results from the evaluation of the Charlotte CSF scholarship program strongly suggest that attempting larger-scale, publicly-funded programs is desirable. The positive findings from Charlotte are consistent with positive results from evaluations of privately-funded programs in New York, Washington, D.C., and Dayton as well as pilot, public choice programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland. Whether those positive results will hold when school choice is attempted in a more complete way cannot be known at present. The existing evidence is encouraging enough that we should implement new school choice programs to see if these significant benefits can be reproduced on a larger scale.

Notes

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2. See Jay P. Greene, "A Survey of Results from Voucher Experiments: Where We Are and What We Know," *Civic Report*, The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Number 11, July 2000. Available on-line at: http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_11.htm.
3. See Thomas D. Cook and Donald T. Campbell, *Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin) 1979.
4. See Jacob and Patricia Cohen, *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences, Second Edition* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum) 1983.
5. See for example, Barbara Schneider and James S. Coleman, eds., *Parents, Their Children, and Schools* (Boulder: Westview) 1983.
6. See Gary Burtless, ed., *Does Money Matter* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings) 1996.
7. Demographic characteristics of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district were obtained from the School District Data Book Profiles, available on the web at: http://govinfo.library.orst.edu/sddb-stateis.html, accessed on August 15, 2000.

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
THE CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND
PHILADELPHIA PROGRAM

September 2003

Prepared by:

Alexander D. Schuh, Ph.D.
FRONTIER21 EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Elaine Simon, Ph.D.
University of Pennsylvania

FRONTIER21 EDUCATION SOLUTIONS
2010 Brandywine Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130
Tel/Fax: 215.587.6460
www.frontier21.net

University of Pennsylvania
Center for Urban Studies
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Tel: 215-898-1182

INTRODUCTION

The Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia (CSFP) is a non-profit organization dedicated solely to supporting the educational progress of economically disadvantaged students. CSFP accomplishes this task primarily through the provision of scholarships to those disadvantaged students wanting to attend private schools in Philadelphia. In early 2003, Dr. Alex Schuh of FRONTIER 21 and Dr. Elaine Simon of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Urban Studies evaluated the progress that CSFP was making toward achieving their goals. This report discusses the findings and methods of that evaluation.

This evaluation study was completed as Philadelphia and the rest of nation are undergoing a period of tremendous educational change and experimentation. One aim of the evaluation was to assist CSFP with understanding their role in the larger context of school choice and school reform that is shaping the future of education in Philadelphia.

More than any other time in the past 100 years, parents are being provided diverse opportunities to choose the types of educational environments they want for their children. Under new federal "No Child Left Behind Act" legislation, parents are being offered a chance to choose the traditional public school to which they would like to send their child. Charter school legislation in 26 states, including Pennsylvania, is creating new types of privately run public schools, most of which choose their students by lottery. Private management companies have begun bringing new models for education to Philadelphia's public schools under the State takeover of the Philadelphia School District. In selected states and major cities, government agencies have begun providing money towards vouchers that allow students to attend private schools, though this approach is currently being challenged in state and federal courts. The Pennsylvania Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) law is allowing corporations to donate tax-free funds to scholarship programs that assist families wanting to send their children to private schools. Finally, the number of students being home schooled across the country is estimated at two million, and is growing rapidly. Each of these options presents a unique set of advantages and challenges to parents, educators and policymakers. One of the primary advantages of scholarship organizations such as CSFP has been their ability to connect economically disadvantaged students with institutions that serve their unique needs and interests.

The majority of this study's activities focused primarily on the contexts and achievements of the CSFP program during the academic year 2002-03, and on the educational experiences of the scholarship recipients and their families. This final project report provides an overview of the goals of the evaluation, the methods used during the data collection (with additional information in the Appendix), results from the surveys, interviews, focus groups and observations, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations for the program's future.

Goals of the Evaluation Project

As the first evaluation of the CSF Philadelphia program since its inception in 1998, this study was designed to accomplish three main objectives:

1. to assess the impact of the program on the students and parents who have received CSFP scholarships,

2. to provide CSFP with information that will help them to better achieve their goals in the future, and
3. to prepare CSFP to collect additional information that will be useful for tracking the progress of their participants over time.

Multiple evaluation questions were needed to investigate the nature of the contexts and experiences of CSFP scholarship students. The evaluators asked:

a) How do the students' experiences in their new schools compare to their previous school experiences?
b) How do the parents' experiences with the new schools compare to their previous experiences with their children's schools?
c) What are the factors affecting successful participation in the program?
d) What are the long-term outcomes of the program?

These questions were addressed through a series of surveys, interviews, site visits and focus groups. All of these data collection efforts were completed by early Summer, 2003.

Results from the Survey of Participating Schools

All of the schools that were participating in the CSFP program during the 2002-03 school year were surveyed to obtain data on their programs, on their involvement with CSFP and CSFP's scholarship students, and on the progress of the CSFP students enrolled in their school in the Spring of 2003. Two hundred eight (208) schools were surveyed, nearly all of the estimated 220 private schools in the City of Philadelphia. A total of 169 schools (81.3%) returned completed survey forms.

School Characteristics

LONGEVITY

Of the schools surveyed, the great majority (87%) had been in operation for more than 16 years. Only 8 schools (5%) had been in operation for five years or less. The longevity of the CSFP-participating schools reflects the fact that Philadelphia has a long and established history of private and religious education serving all sectors of the City.

TUITION

Tuition costs ranged from a low of $1,100 per year to a high of $22,000 per year. Of all the variations in the operations of the participating schools, tuition was the most diverse, with some schools only taking students who belonged to their associated church, some having special tuition for members of their religious organization who were not members of their church, and some having special (higher) tuition for children who were not members of their religious organizations. In general, tuition costs were similar across grade levels within schools, with parents paying similar tuition amounts across age levels. Another area of variation was in the charging of fees. Twenty-seven schools (16%) charged no additional fees for services, whereas others charged a range of 5 dollars to 950 dollars over tuition costs. The average fee was $190 per student. Fees included:

- Activity Fee
- Materials Fee
- Book Fee
- Uniform Fee
- Lunch Fee
- Application Fee
- Admission Test Fee
- Service Fee
- Registration Fee
- Extracurricular Fee
- Yard Supervision Fee
- Church Contributions
- School Trips
- Non-supporting Fee
- Non-Fundraising Fee
- Parent Association Fee
- Computer Fee, and
- Onetime Fee.

These fees can be a major source of funds for some schools, but may not be completely clear to parents when they are considering a program for their child.

Students and their families can offset their tuition costs and fees through tuition assistance from the school, CSFP scholarships, other scholarship funds, and sometimes a combination of all three. The surveyed schools indicated that an average of 17% of their families receive tuition assistance from the school. This ranged from a low of 0 % to a high of 100%. Responding schools reported a similar amount of families receiving scholarships from outside agencies other than CSFP: an average of 18% of families in those schools received assistance from non-CSFP scholarship programs including BLOCS (for Catholics), the Connelly Foundation, the Kremer Foundation, individual church scholarships, and memorial funds. Some schools reported having no scholarship programs other than CSFP (24 schools- 17%), while some reported having as many as seven different programs.

The average amount of CSFP scholarship funds provided per student for 2002-03 was $863. This amount was just below half of the average amount of tuition costs charged by the participating schools ($1,998).

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Surveyed schools were asked about the characteristics of their environment, for CSFP's use in informing parents and students regarding the types of activities and services available in each school, and to determine the types of services that CSFP students were currently receiving. When asked whether they had an active parent association at their school, 148 schools (89%) indicated that they had that structure in place.

The CSFP-participating schools were asked what percentage of their families were “low income” (less than $20,000 per year). Although many schools did not have an estimate (29 schools- 17%), those that collected that information or could make a reasonable estimate indicated that, on average, thirty-three percent (33%) of their families earned less than $20,000. Half of the schools estimated that thirty percent (30%) or more of their families fell into that income bracket, while half indicated that less than thirty percent (30%) of their families earned that amount. The average income of CSFP families for 2002-03 was $25,373.

Private schools are often cited as not having to "take all comers", as the public schools must, and therefore they can be considered to "cream", or take the best students, who would otherwise attend the neighborhood public schools (or be home-schooled). One area that private schools are felt to be particularly weak in is providing services to "special education" students. This survey found that, although the majority of surveyed schools (100- 62%) did not provide services to special needs students, 61 schools (38%) did provide those services.

The schools participating in CSFP were asked about the types of extra-curricular activities that they provided for students. The chart below indicates the types of activities available at the schools, and the percentages of schools offering those activities.

Table 1. Extra-curricular Activities Offered by CSFP- Participating Schools

ACTIVITY	After School Art	After School Music	After School Dance/ Theater	After School Sports	After School Clubs and Other Activities
PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS	5 %	45 %	86%	85%	37%

The majority of surveyed schools offer a variety of extra-curricular programs for their students, with the most popular being sports, dance and theater.

TESTING

Private schools are often criticized for not holding students accountable to the same types of standards set for public school students. In particular, these schools are often portrayed as not assessing their students with the type of rigorous standardized assessments that the students would otherwise take if they were enrolled in the local public school. However, this study found that 161 schools of the 169 (95%) surveyed gave some form of standardized test to track their students’ academic progress. Over half of the schools (88- 52%) tested students using the Terra Nova test, the same test currently being used by the School District of Philadelphia. The second most widely used test was the Stanford Achievement Test: 22 schools (13%) used this test, which was the test used by the School District of Philadelphia until the most recent school year. Six schools (4%) administered the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA), which is the statewide test used to assess progress in Pennsylvania public schools. Most schools tested students in every grade above Grade 2.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Of the schools surveyed, ninety percent (90%) had some religious affiliation. The most prevalent affiliations were with the Catholic Church/Archdiocese of Philadelphia (59%) and the Society of Friends/Quakers (4%). Other religious affiliations included:

- Baptist
- Islamic
- Jewish
- Presbyterian
- Lutheran
- Episcopalian
- Church of God
- Catholic- Byzantine Rite
- Ukrainian Catholic
- Crooked Places Made Straight Ministries
- Anglican
- Mennonite and
- Seventh Day Adventist.

ASSESSMENTS OF CSFP

The 169 schools responding to the survey were asked to assess the CSFP program and the CSFP scholarship students attending their school. They were asked to compare the CSFP students to other students in their schools on five key variables.

- With regard to Academics, ninety-four percent (94%) felt that the CSFP students were about the same or higher achieving than their fellow students.
- With regard to Family Income, ninety-nine percent (99%) of the schools felt that the CSFP students were about the same or lower income than their fellow students.
- In the area of Parent Involvement, an important factor for student success, ninety-one percent (91%) of the schools indicated that the CSFP parents had about the same or higher parent involvement in their child's education than their fellow parents.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of the schools felt that their CSFP students were about the same or higher in Attendance than their peers.
- The large majority of the schools (93%) indicated that the number of CSFP students' Disciplinary Incidents was about the same or lower than their fellow students'.

The participating schools were asked in the survey whether they had seen any improvement or worsening in CSFP students' academic performance, attendance, or need for discipline since coming to school, which are strong indications of how well students are adjusting to their new environments. Regarding Academics, 100% of the schools felt that the CSFP students were doing about the same or better than when they first arrived. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the schools felt that the CSFP students' Attendance was about the same or better since coming to the school. And all of the schools (100%) felt that students' needs for Discipline since coming to the school were about the same or better, with thirty percent (30%) indicating that the need for discipline of the CSFP students had decreased.

When asked if they had ever referred parents to CSFP, most of the schools (87%) stated that they had done so. When asked if they would accept more CSFP students in the future, three quarters of the schools (76%) said that they definitely would, two schools (1%) said they would not, and nearly one-quarter of the schools (23%) said that their decision would depend on the characteristics of the individual CSFP student.

Finally, when asked whether the CSFP staff had been responsive to the needs and requests of the schools, nearly all of the schools (98%) reported that they had been Very or Somewhat Responsive, while three schools (2%) believed the staff had been Not Very or Not at All Responsive.

A comment section of the survey provided an opportunity for schools to provide feedback to the program. Most comments were positive and appreciative of the program. The following responses are typical of the feedback that the schools provided on the survey forms:

> "THANK YOU VERY MUCH, WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL", and
>
> "CSFP SEEMS TO HAVE DEVELOPED AN EFFICIENT MANNER IN WHICH TO HANDLE PAPERWORK & CORRESPONDENCE."

One school felt that it was "HARD TO REACH ANYONE IN THE CSFP OFFICE", however.

Several schools stated in their comments that they were closing in the Fall of 2003. The majority of those schools were run by the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Student Attendance and Disciplinary Information

All of the surveyed schools were asked to report on attendance and disciplinary actions taken regarding each of the CSFP students in their schools (In School Suspensions {lower level}, Out of School Suspensions {higher level}, and Detentions). Of the 1,333 CSFP students reported on (out of 1,640- 81%), only one percent (1%) had withdrawn. It is clear from this information that the CSFP students are being retained by their schools at very high rates, with only a very few withdrawing by the end of the academic year. Even if students withdraw from their school, the CSFP scholarship is portable from school to school: students can move within Philadelphia and take the scholarship with them. If families must move to a different neighborhood or otherwise have a need to attend a different private school, they do not risk losing their funding. There appears to be little need to exercise this option, however, at least during the course of the academic year.

Student absences reported by the schools were generally low, with students missing fewer than 6 days, on average, by the end of the school year. This corresponds with an estimated average daily attendance rate of ninety-six percent (96%). Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students missed 8 days or fewer. Several students (4%) missed over 20 school days (which corresponds to an average daily attendance rate of 87%), however, with the highest reported absence being 54 days (a 67% average daily attendance rate). Some schools appear to maintain students on their roles even when faced with very high rates of absence

Very few students were reported as having had serious discipline problems at their schools. Only 26 students (<1%) were given in-school suspensions, and 14 students were given out-of-school suspensions (<1%). Fourteen percent (14%) of students were given some kind of after school or Saturday detentions, with less than one-tenth of one percent (<.1%) receiving 30 or more detentions.

Results from the Student Focus Groups

Two student focus groups were conducted with CSFP students in grades 3 to 5 and 6 to 8, respectively. Students from younger grades (K-2) were not requested to participate due to the difficulty of interviewing very young children in group settings, and students of high school age were not contacted because the program will be focusing only on serving students in grades K-8 in the future. Five students participated in the focus group of younger students, while 7 students participated in the older group.

The students were asked a series of questions about their adjustment to the school, their activities before, during and after school, their participation in projects or extra-curricular activities, and whether they are treated any differently from other students because they are on a scholarship to attend. Overall, students in both groups indicated that they enjoyed their schools, that the schools felt very safe, that they were generally accepted there, and that the schools had considerable projects and extra-curricular activities for them to be involved in. Most of the students interviewed attended their school with a sibling or cousin, making the school feel less remote, and more an extension of their family. This reinforces the concept that CSFP ascribes to that their scholarships are enabling parents to find and develop supportive educational communities for their children.

Grades 3-5

The students were generally positive about their schools, pointing out features that they liked, including classes (science, spelling and computers were particularly attractive), teachers, and fellow students. One student described what she had done in her favorite class, Spelling, that day.

Interviewer:	"So your favorite class is Spelling."
Student:	"I really like Spelling. My teacher teaches all of my classes. But I like that the best."
Interviewer:	"Tell me what you did in Spelling today."
Student:	"Spelling, we had to write sentences with each spelling word."
Interviewer:	"Do you remember any of the words?"
Student:	"Um, Animals, However, words like that."

The students were asked about the resources available at their school, and how often they used them.

Interviewer:	"We were just talking about computers. Does everyone have computers at their school?"
Students:	"Yes."
Interviewer:	"How often do you use them?"
Student:	"Every day."
Student:	"Every Thursday."
Student:	"Every day and every Friday."
Interviewer:	"What do you use them for? Is it mostly for learning Math and Reading?"
Student:	"Projects. Powerpoint projects mostly."
Student:	"We're doing animation, making a movie on our computer."

A preliminary analysis of the focus group interviews finds that the students seem to be adjusting well to their schools, and to be making good use of the classes and materials available at those schools.

Grades 6-8

The students in the middle grades focus group indicated that they generally felt safe and enjoyed their school. Their schools felt like communities to them, and they frequently mentioned the word "community" when describing their school. The students felt generally that the academic and social atmospheres were rewarding, and were a good fit with their interests. In keeping with the concept that middle school is a time when students begin to focus on the ideas of equity, social grouping and social opportunity, several students talked about the social atmosphere at the schools they attended.

Interviewer: "What is the best thing about your school?"
Student: "The best thing is Spirit Day. Students are supposed to dress up in the school colors. Some don't but they don't send you home or anything. Our grade had an Olympic theme, where the students were different sports."
Interviewer: "Did you do a sport?"
Student: "Yeah. I chose boxing. We trained for a few weeks. I was supposed to go down and the other girl would win. It was great!"

Another student focused on the social atmosphere at their school.

Interviewer: "Do you like going to your school?"
Student: "I enjoy it. Thanks to the scholarship fund, they've allowed us to go to the school. My two sisters and my brother also go there. What I like best is the teachers and the Principal. Even though they might get mad or yell, scream, they show they care. It's like a family school. The Principal is the mother of our teacher. My other teacher is the wife of the Principal's brother."

The Arts were particularly inspiring to the students.

Interviewer: "Tell me about your other classes."
Student: "We have Art classes every Thursday at 11:30. I really like it."
Interviewer: "What are you doing in Art these days?"
Student: "We started out doing comic books. I have mine with me. I'm still working on it. But we might do a mural. We're just starting to plan it out. That will be cool."

Student: "Yes, in art class, they try to get you to do a lot of things, and there's a lot of hands-on things that they teach you. Our mini courses, I think they're really creative, hands-on. In one of the classes there's dissection and you get to take trips places to go see, like maybe we'll go out sometime and go to the park and go hear birds, and it makes you think, and then when we get back we have to remember what we hear. I think that it's fun."

Students in the "older" focus group generally felt safe at the school:

Interviewer: "Do you feel safe at school?"

Student: "Yes because we don't have to worry about any violence or any weapons brought into school. There are no unsafe places. We have a safety program – they teach you about the dangers of having violence in the schools. We watched a movie about kids that brought a gun to school and shot a couple kids and they talk to us about how violence is bad."

Student: "In my school we have the peace program, where the kids nominate peace people, like peacemakers, and they hang their pictures on the wall, and at the end of the year someone gets the peace medal. The teachers decide on who gets the medal."

The academics for the older students were generally thought to be challenging and interesting.

Student: "My favorite class is science; it's very hands-on and a lot of fun. I like doing experiments, that's what we sometimes do. We did an experiment on leaves where we had to put stuff on leaves to see what colors they would turn. We did something similar to that with rocks, and we went to this place called ring rocks, and we took hammers and they made a ringing sound."

Student: "I like Social studies- I like learning about different countries and their capitals. I like drawing the country or the continent and learn about the different things they have in their countries."

Student: "Math is my favorite class because we get to do a lot of stuff and we learn a lot and I really like math, I'm really good at it. Anything – projects, I really like when our teacher gives us projects, when we work on the computers. This year we were learning geometry and we made a robot out of all different shapes and stuff."

Because several of the students were attending religious schools, they were asked how they felt about the religious aspect of their school. Most indicated that the religion was a benign but relatively pleasant aspect of their school. A couple of students felt that their school was a bit "strict" and students were probably "not having much fun" to the extent that they would like. Other students mentioned that their attention to religion had grown stronger by exploring religious issues in their school.

Student: "We get religion essentials – they give you a word and you got to define the definition, in your regular classroom. We go to Mass every Friday. I'm Baptist, and I go to a Catholic school. It doesn't make me feel any different because it's mostly the same. Feelings about religion have changed a little bit because they teach you about what a Christian is and how to be a Christian and they get into more detail about Jesus and God."

Student: "When I was in my old school, I really wasn't into religion, but now that I'm in this school I'm more into religion."

The focus group students were also asked about their plans for the future. The middle grades students all indicated some interest in attending college, though most were focused on the high schools that they would be attending. Most of the students named private high schools as their first choice after leaving their current school.

Results from the Student Survey

One hundred fifty CSFP students in grades 4 through 8 were selected at random, and sent a one-page survey form to complete. A total of 74 (50%) of surveyed students returned completed surveys. The median grade of students returning the survey was 6, and the median age was 12 years old, with a range of 9 to 15 years.

The students reported attending their CSFP-sponsored schools an average of 4.5 years, with a low of 1 year of attendance and a high of 9 years. The large majority of students came to their scholarship school either from public school or as entering Kindergartners (80%). Only twenty percent (20%) of students who had previously attended private schools received the CSFP scholarship.

The students were asked what their academic grades had been in their previous school (if they had gone to another) and how their grades were in their current school. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the students surveyed who had gone to another school stated that their grades in their previous school were Good or Excellent, and a similar seventy-nine percent (79%) of those same students felt that their current grades were Good or Excellent. Eighty-five percent (85%) of students who had only attended their current school felt that their grades were Good or Excellent. Generally, the estimates of academic achievement levels were similar for both transferring and non-transferring students.

When asked how interested they were in their current schoolwork, fifty-four percent (54%) of the students stated that they were very interested. Only one student stated that they were not interested in their schoolwork. When asked whether they felt their school environment was safe, all but one student stated that they felt safe at their school (99%).

The students were asked whether they participated in any type of extra-curricular activity offered by their school. Two thirds of the students (68%) reported that they were involved in some type of after-school program at their school. The most popular activity was sports (38%), with the next most popular activity being tutoring assistance (22%). Table 2 below provides more details on students' extra-curricular activities.

Table 2. Extra-curricular Activities of CSFP Students

ACTIVITY	After School Art	After School Music	After School Dance/ Theater	After School Sports	After School Tutoring	No After School Activities
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING	8 %	14 %	14%	38%	22%	32%

When the students were asked whether they could get extra assistance with their schoolwork at their CSFP-sponsored school if they needed it, the large majority of the students (96%) felt that they could get that assistance. When asked whether they felt that their CSFP school was too difficult, just right or too easy, seven percent (7%) felt that it was too difficult, eighty-eight percent (88%) felt that it was just right, and five percent (5%) felt that their school was too easy.

Regarding the social climate of the school, students were asked whether it was difficult or easy to make friends at their school. The large majority (90%) felt that it was easy to make friends at their CSFP-sponsored school.

The students were asked how they felt about seven important characteristics of their school: the teachers, the principal, the other students, their classwork, their homework, the afterschool programs at the school, and the computers. Students favored the computers most of all in their CSFP schools (77%), followed by the other students, the teachers, the afterschool programs, the principal, their classwork and homework (the lowest rated, at 37%). Over fifty percent (50%) of the students surveyed indicated that they liked "a lot" most of the important aspects of their schools. The responses to this question are provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Student Appreciation of Important Aspects of the School Environment

School Aspect	Like it very much
The computers	77%
The other students	70%
The teachers	68%
The afterschool programs	66%
The principal	62%
The classwork	51%
The homework	37%

The students were asked what they would change about their schools if they could change just one thing. Fifteen percent (15%) stated that they would not change anything: "Nothing. It is perfect." The majority of other students focused on extra-curricular activities and lunch: "Better hot lunches. More after-school activities." Some focused on specific changes desired at the school: "We could have more music classes, because our music teacher quit."

When students were asked whether or not they were going back to their school next year, the large majority of students below eighth grade (90%) indicated that they were. Most of the eighth graders (90%) were in their final year at their school, and would be required to go to another school for ninth grade. Several of the younger students who were not returning commented that they could not return because their schools were being permanently closed down. As one student stated: "I WISH MY SCHOOL WAS NOT CLOSING IN JUNE. I AM GOING TO A NEW SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER."

Results from the Parent Survey

Three hundred parents of CSFP students in grades Kindergarten through 8 were selected at random to participate in this evaluation study. All three hundred were sent a two page survey to complete. Of the 300 parents receiving the survey, 163 (54%) returned completed survey forms.

The parent survey was designed to determine some background information about the CSFP parents that the program had not already gathered, and to obtain feedback about the program's impact on their CSFP scholarship child(ren). The first part of the two page survey asked about their family in general, and the second part asked specifically about their youngest child in the CSFP program. Because the parents surveyed did not include parents of students only in the ninth grade and above, all of the youngest children about which the parents responded were in grades Kindergarten though 8.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Some of the parents did have CSFP scholarship children in 9th grade and above (7%). While over half (56%) of the parents surveyed had only 1 child in the CSFP program, twenty-seven percent (27%) had two, fourteen percent (14%) had three, three percent (3%) had four, and one percent (1%) had five. The parents of CSFP 3rd graders represented the largest contingent responding to the survey (24%), while parents of 11th and 12th graders were the smallest group responding (1% each).

In the coming year, new scholarships will only be given to three eligible students per household. Under these rules, only four percent (4%) of families currently participating would not be eligible for scholarships for all of their children.

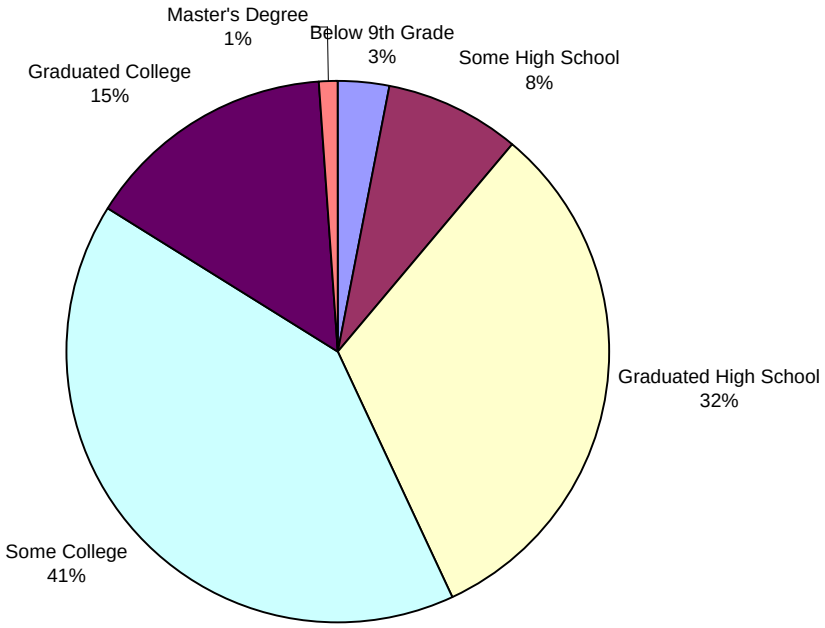
Forty-one percent (41%) of parents surveyed were raising their children in two parent households. Eighty-one percent (81%) of parents surveyed cared for more than one child in their house. Nearly one half (48%) of parents reported that they had two children in their household, with a few parents (2%) reporting they had as many as 7 children altogether in their household. The average number of children per scholarship household was reported to be 2.7. The numbers of children in the households varied from 1 to 7.

Parents were asked how many miles they lived from their CSFP sponsored school and how many miles they lived from a regular public school. Parents lived, on average, three miles from their CSFP child's schools, and, on average, one mile from the nearest regular public school. Considering that traffic in the City can be difficult, parents and students are making substantially more effort in terms of transportation to connect to their CSFP school than they would otherwise need to connect to their local public school.

When asked about their ethnic backgrounds, nearly one-third (34%) indicated that they were Caucasian, nearly one half (48%) were African-American, thirteen percent (13%) were Hispanic and the remainder (6%) were Asian-American.

Parents' formal schooling levels differed significantly, as well. Over half (57%) had taken some college coursework. Eighty-nine percent had graduated from high school. More information on parents' levels of formal schooling is provided in Chart 1 below.

CHART 1. CSFP PARENTS' EDUCATION LEVELS



The parents' reportedly high levels of academic achievement relative to the general population in Philadelphia is consistent with findings that parents who pursue educational choices are more devoted to education as a means of upward mobility (Howell, Peterson et al., 2002, *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools,* Brookings Institution).

The CSFP parents surveyed were asked to respond to questions about their youngest child in the CSFP program (students in grades K-8). When asked if they knew the mission of their child's school, ninety-one percent (91%) stated that they did know that school's mission. When asked if they volunteered their time at their child's school, sixty percent (60%) indicated that they volunteered for the school. When asked if they were involved in fundraising at the school, nearly all (90%) stated that they were involved in fundraising activities. Note that several schools charge additional fees if parents do not volunteer or contribute to fundraising efforts.

When asked whether they had concerns about their child's safety at their CSFP-sponsored school, one-fifth of parents (22%) stated that they did have safety concerns. The CSFP parents were asked whether their child's behaviors had improved in four key areas since coming to their CSFP-sponsored schools. Every parent (100%) reported that their child's behaviors had been better or about the same in the following areas: academics, attendance, the need for discipline at school, and the need for discipline at home. The academic behaviors of students were reported to be most improved, with nearly three quarters of parents (71%) stating that their child's academic behavior was better than before they attended their CSFP-sponsored school.

The CSFP parents were asked to rate the importance of various factors in choosing their CSFP-child's school. The most important factors reported by parents were the academic reputation of the school (97%) and the presence of good teachers and high quality instruction (96%). The least important factor, though still important to almost half of the parents (48%), was a child's poor performance in their previous school. For more information on the reasons parents provided for choosing their CSFP child's school, see Table 5 below.

Table 5. Parents' Reasons for Selecting their CSFP Child's School

REASONS	Important/ Very Important
Good teachers and high quality of instruction	97%
Academic reputation of this school	96%
I prefer the emphasis and educational philosophy of this school	92%
Safety for my child	90%
Religious instruction	88%
Cost of the school	83%
Promises made in the school's literature	83%
Financial aid from the school for my child	79%
Recommendations of a teacher or official	75%
Convenient location	71%
My child wanted to attend this school	70%
Recommendations of friends or neighbors	63%
I was unhappy with the curriculum & instruction at his/her previous school	62%
My child has special needs that were not met at his/her previous school	50%
My child was performing poorly at their previous school	48%

As can be seen from the table above, safety is a major concern for parents when choosing a school. However, a school's academic reputation and educational emphasis is sometimes more important when parents are making school choices than the perceived level of school safety. It is interesting to note that the majority of parents did not choose to place their child in the private school because they were doing poorly academically, but because they felt the school could offer a certain kind of educational atmosphere and opportunity than they would otherwise have gotten. This supports the notion that educational choices are often being made to connect parents and students with a unique type of educational and social community- a concept referred to as "social capital" (Coleman, J, 1990, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Harvard University Press). In keeping with that observation, a large majority (88%) of the parents surveyed indicated that religious instruction was an important factor in choosing their child's school. Religious schools offer the opportunity to connect parents and students to a larger community of like-minded people, introduce students to religious principles and thought, and have a reputation for emphasizing ethical behavior and discipline (Bryk, A., Lee, V, & Holland, P., 1993, *Catholic schools and the common good*, Harvard University Press).

The CSFP parents were asked about important characteristics of the environments of the schools their children were attending. The large majority of parents surveyed felt that their child had access to computers and other new technologies (87%). A similarly large percentage of parents also felt that their child was motivated to learn at their CSFP-sponsored school (87%). Fewer parents felt that their child's school had small class sizes (54%), and that they were able to influence instruction

and activities in their child's school (53%). The majority of CSFP parents surveyed felt that their schools possessed all of the characteristics identified by the researchers as key areas of parental concern. For more information on parents' responses to questions about these characteristics, see Table 6 below.

Table 6. CSFP Parents' Responses to Statements Regarding School Characteristics

School Characteristic	True
My child has access to computers and other new technologies	87%
My child is motivated to learn	87%
The quality of instruction is high	83%
My child's achievement level is improving	81%
There is good communication between the school and my household	81%
The school has effective leadership and administration	78%
My child receives sufficient individual attention	71%
Support services (i.e., counseling, health care, etc.) are available to my child	65%
The school has small class sizes	54%
I am able to influence instruction and school activities	53%

The fact that relatively few parents (although still a majority) felt that their school had small class sizes, a characteristic often emphasized as a benefit of private education, further supports the notion that the CSFP parents are choosing their schools primarily because of the particular characteristics of the school environment and in the interest of connecting their family with a particular type of community and social capital (Coleman, J, 1990, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Harvard University Press).

The CSFP parents were asked to provide their opinions regarding several additional statements about their child's school. Parents generally described their schools as being safe, well-disciplined schools with strong instruction and curriculum, but were lacking resources that would help with areas such as reducing class sizes and providing more extra-curricular activities. For example, one-third of the parents surveyed (36%) felt that their child's school did not have enough extra-curricular activities. Less than half (43%) felt that their child's school had sufficient financial resources. A large majority of parents felt that their child's school had high standards and expectations (88 %), that they were satisfied with the quality of instruction (89%), that they were satisfied with the school's curriculum (91%) and that students felt safe at their child's school (93%). Most of the parents felt that they were receiving the services that they had been seeking in a school. For more information regarding CSFP parents' opinions of their children's schools, see Table 7 below.

Table 7. CSFP Parents' Opinions Regarding their Child's School

School Statement	Agree/ Strongly Agree
Students feel safe at the school	93%
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	91%
The school has a good discipline policy	90%
I am satisfied with the instruction offered	89%
This school has high standards and expectation for students	88%
This school has good administrative leadership	83%
The school feels like a part of my family	76%

This school has good buildings and grounds	75%
This school has small class sizes	70%
This school is in a good neighborhood	68%
This school has sufficient financial resources	43%
The school does not have enough extracurricular activities	36%

In order to begin to assess CSFP students' levels of academic success, CSFP parents were asked to provide their child's report card grades from their latest report (end of year or just prior to the end) in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, History/Social Studies and Science. A wide variety of grading conventions were reported, particularly from parents of students in the early grades (K-2). Students received numerical grades, traditional letter grades, grades of satisfactory and unsatisfactory, grades of Good or Needs Improvement and similar types of reports. The large majority of students were taking all of the subjects inquired into in the survey: Math, Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. From parents' reports, CSFP students appeared to be doing quite well academically in their schools. The CSFP students' reported numerical grades and traditional letter grades are provided in Tables 8 and 9 below. The scores show students achieving mostly As and Bs, or scoring between 80 and 100 points. Scores are fairly consistent across subjects (and across grading methods), with no particular problem areas standing out among the students. Mathematics appears to be the weakest subject for the CSFP students. The scores for the other students in the Very Good or Satisfactory categories were determined to be too difficult to set on a hierarchical scale.

Table 8. CSFP Students' Letter Grades as Reported by CSFP Parents

Subject	A	B	C	D	F
Math	36%	49%	10%	3%	2%
English	46%	46%	8%	0%	0%
Social Studies	51%	39%	10%	0%	0%
Science	41%	43%	16%	0%	0%

Table 9. CSFP Students' Numerical Grades as Reported by CSFP Parents

Subject	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	0-59
Math	38%	42%	20%	0%	0%
English	42%	48%	10%	0%	0%
Social Studies	45%	45%	10%	0%	0%
Science	47%	47%	6%	0%	0%

When asked whether they would be sending their child back to their CSFP-sponsored school the following year, ninety-one percent (91%) of parents indicated that they were planning to. Of those who would not be sending their students back to their CSFP schools, one stated that they needed more financial help, one stated that their income increased and they were therefore no longer eligible, one was moving out of town, and seven (4%) were no longer eligible because their child was entering high school and CSFP was no longer awarding scholarships to secondary students.

Results from the School Site Observations

The researchers visited two of the CSFP-participating schools that were attended by the largest numbers of students for the purposes of observing the activities at the schools and interviewing key staff members about the nature of the school and their interactions with CSFP.

Both schools visited shared a number of characteristics, including:

- Clean, bright facilities
- Orderly movement
- Uniforms
- Respected principals and teachers
- Respect for visitors
- Emphasis on traditional learning methods
- Clear expectations broadcast verbally and in print throughout
- Colorful classrooms
- Nearly 100% African American students
- Dedicated teachers with low turnover and
- Celebrational cultures.

The schools' staff members indicated in interviews that the schools were increasingly pressed for funds, and had been forced to reduce some services or cut staff in recent years due to pressures from declining enrollments and hesitancy to raise tuition to cover costs. The schools were still managing to provide students with high quality teachers and relatively up to date computers, although there was some doubt about how long this could continue. The charter schools, providing a free education often packaged as a private school type of opportunity, have been contributing to declining enrollments in both schools in recent years.

The schools were clearly focused on creating a community that was open and welcoming to students, parents and outsiders interested in the school. Parents were seen sitting in several of the classrooms at the schools, teachers took time to explain the work that their students were doing and to introduce visitors to the class, and student work was displayed proudly throughout both schools.

Interviews with CSFP Staff

The CSFP staff were interviewed formally for this study in order to assess the history, current organization, and future directions of the program, and to obtain staff members' input into the design of the evaluation. The program's Executive Director and Program Director, CSFP's entire staff at the time, were interviewed, as well as the President of CSFP's non-profit Board. The CSFP staff and Board President were questioned regarding their previous experiences, the history of the program, the philosophy of the program, the calendar of operations of the program, the current evaluation and data collection efforts of the program, and the data collection an.d evaluation needs of the program in the future. The interviews outlined considerable change in the organization since its founding five years previously. The program was begun as a division of the national office of the Children's Scholarship Fund, headquartered in New York City. The program's creators hired an initial staff for the office who

managed the scholarships in the first three years. As CSFP developed its own identity, and the national office encouraged their independence, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation was established and a new Executive Director and Program Director were hired. Changes were made to the mission and organization of the program, including a stronger focus on supporting scholarship students in the younger grades (K-8).

The CSFP office still gleans much support from the New York CSF office, with fundraising at CSFP matched dollar for dollar by the New York program. CSFP's administrative staff is funded by the CSFP Board of Directors and CSF national office, which allows every dollar raised at the Philadelphia office to go toward scholarships.

CSFP does not impose criteria on their scholarship recipients, other than that they must earn below the income limits set by the program, the students must attend an accredited school in Philadelphia and they must reside within the City limits. This sets CSFP apart from several other scholarship organizations in town that use various criteria to select students to receive their scholarships (for example, the BLOCS scholarship is only reserved for Catholic children). The result of this neutrality is that the recipients of CSFP's scholarships are incredibly diverse, and come from all parts of the city.

The staff of the program is very small considering the large number of families that the program serves. The advantages of the small staff are evident in their high levels of communication, their efficiency, and their sharing of some core duties. These duties are currently maximizing staff time, however, with time devoted to fundraising, raising program awareness, recruiting, communicating with schools, communicating with families, making site visits to schools, verifying student status, and working with the staff of the national CSF office. Any additional duties that might be considered, such as tracking students' progress, providing information to assist parents' school choices or connecting scholarship students to outside supportive agencies or organizations would require additional staff.

Conclusions and Recommendations

CSFP is an organization dedicated to building stronger communities in the City of Philadelphia by supporting choices in education for low-income families. The approach that has been taken by CSFP is unique in Philadelphia, which is, in turn, an unusual environment for school choice. Philadelphia has had a long history of private education that stretches back to the founding of the City. The City's founder and principal designer, William Penn, originally asked the Society of Friends (Quakers) to provide for the education of the City's youth. Since that time in the early 18th Century, a large number of private schools has developed. The City now has over 200 operating private schools- a number nearly equal to the number of public schools- many of which have been operating for over 50 years. Private schools exist in nearly every neighborhood in the city, with tuition costs running from relatively inexpensive to extraordinarily expensive. Many private schools have educated several generations of family members and have become cornerstone institutions in their communities.

The CSFP scholarship program has developed a model that allows low-income families to choose from whichever private school they want to attend, provided the school is within the City of Philadelphia. Unlike some scholarship or voucher programs, which provide a set amount for families

which may or may not cover the full costs of the private school, or which may be affiliated with a particular school or require a student to meet certain academic criteria, CSFP asks that families make a substantial financial contribution to their child's education in order to qualify for their scholarship. This requirement that parents take financial and personal responsibility for their child's education is a conscious decision intended to increase families' attachment and investment in the gift of education that they are receiving. The high rates of student and parent involvement in the schools and the perception among parents and students that they are a true part of a supportive school community provide evidence that the CSFP model is working well.

CSFP students appear to be doing well both socially and academically in their schools. Students are engaged in large numbers in extra-curricular activities at their schools. The schools tend to rate the CSFP students as having fewer discipline problems and being more academically involved than their non-CSFP students. Parents are enthusiastic about the opportunities that their children are receiving in their schools regarding their emotional, behavioral, academic and social growth.

One of the primary advantages cited with regard to providing educational choices to parents and students is the ability to connect families to the type of community and resources that suit their particular desires and perceived needs (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, *Blacks in the White Establishment*, 1991, Yale University Press; Cookson, P. and Persell, C., 1985, *Preparing for Power*, Basic Books). This study found that families and schools are indeed making strong connections that are enhancing their sense of community. This remains true despite the fact that their choices generally require more transportation and access to fewer educational resources and less desirable class sizes than they would prefer. Nearly all participating families are choosing to return their children to their scholarship schools each year, despite the sacrifices required of them to continue their relationships with the schools.

One of the main concerns among parents and students was determined to be a general lack of understanding of what they could do when the CSFP scholarship ended. Many parents and students expressed concern that faced an uncertain future when the scholarship ended, or when their school closed with little warning at the end of the school year. Many expressed hope that the CSFP program could provide them with some guidance about where they might turn to connect with scholarship programs or supportive schools in the future. During the course of this study, CSFP staff and Board members also mentioned a desire to connect students and their families to additional resources beyond what CSFP was designed to offer.

Given the focus of the current CSFP staff and Board on tracking their scholarship students' progress and gathering feedback to support student growth over time, it is recommended that CSFP engage in an effort to gather information on student outcomes as they progress through the program and beyond. This study and the resulting tracking system would enable CSFP to develop and track information on student performance in school, participation in activities inside and outside of school, needs of students receiving scholarships and choices made after graduation from their schools. Such longitudinal information would be extremely valuable in helping to identify and connect participants with important resources that could assist their growth both during and after their participation in the program. Potential tasks that could serve this tracking project are outlined below.

Recommended Student Tracking Project Tasks

TASK	DESCRIPTION
1. Develop Database of Participants	A database of all current program participants could be developed, including demographic and contact information, school performance indicators, lists of extra-curricular activities and involvement with outside organizations.
2. Select Participant and Comparison Groups	Participants for a more intense study of student experiences and outcomes could be selected from the current CSFP scholarship students. Comparison students from a group of candidates not chosen for the scholarship could be selected.
3. Track Participant and Comparison Group Activities	Current and former participants in CSFP and their comparison group counterparts could be contacted to gather complete and up-to-date information for the CSFP student database. Information could be gathered through written surveys, telephone contact and from CSFP's current participant records.
4. Identify Needs and Issues Facing Participants and Comparison Group	Current and former participants in the program might be asked to identify areas both in and outside of school that are affecting their ability to succeed academically. This information could be useful for providing participants with resources from outside organizations and institutions that could improve their chances for success.
5. Test Participants and Comparison Group	CSFP Participants in the study group and their comparison group might be tested annually for several years of the study using a nationally standardized academic test. Scores could then be compiled and analyzed allowing a sense of the academic success of students in the program.

A database of student information that could be developed through the methods outlined below would be useful in helping to track student progress, to document successes within the program, and to connect students and their families to supportive services that cannot be directly provided by CSFP.

APPENDIX

Data collection activities overview

Student Focus Groups

Two student focus groups were developed, one for students in grades 3-5, another for students in grades 6-8. Twelve (12) students were chosen at random from each group of participating students (out of 559 in grades 3-5; 390 in grades 6-8). Letters were sent to parents of those students, informing them about the times and dates for the focus groups, and asking them to respond by telephone. Positive responses were received from 5 parents in each group, and reminder phone calls were made to each parent as the date for the focus groups approached. The focus groups were held between 3:45 and 5:00 pm at the CSFP office in downtown Philadelphia. All five students attended the grades 3-5 focus group. Two students attended the grades 6-8 focus group. Follow up phone interviews were conducted with five (5) additional middle grades students, for a total of 12 students interviewed.

Participating Schools Survey

Survey forms were mailed in early April to all 208 private schools currently participating in the CSFP program. In May, a reminder post card was sent out to the 73 schools that had not returned their forms. Additional survey forms were mailed to several schools. A total of 169 schools (81.3%) returned completed forms. All 169 schools were included in the final analysis.

Parent Survey

Although the CSFP program currently serves student in grades Kindergarten through Twelve, the staff and Board have made a conscious decision to provide scholarships only to students in grades K-8 beginning in the 2003-04 school year. FRONTIER 21 and CSFP staff therefore decided to concentrate our data gathering efforts on the active students and parents in grades K-8. CSFP provided scholarships to 1491 students in those grades during the study year (2002-03). CSFP's records provided information on 996 parents of these K-8 students.

CSFP and FRONTIER 21 staff made a decision to survey 300 parents. A random sample of 300 parents was selected, and survey forms were sent out to them in early May 2003. Reminder postcards were developed and sent to non-responding parents in early June 2003. Several parents were mailed additional survey forms. Ultimately, 163 parents returned completed forms (54%). Analysis was conducted on information from all 163 responding parents.

Student Survey

CSFP and FRONTIER 21 staff surveyed 150 students in grades 4-8. The participants were selected at random from the 760 CSFP students in those grades. Survey forms were mailed to students homes in early May 2003. In early June 2003, reminder postcards were mailed out to the parents of the non-responding students. Ultimately, 74 students returned completed survey forms (50%). Final analyses were conducted using information from all 74 responding students.

Interviews with CSFP Staff

Interviews were conducted with CSFP staff members Ina Lipman (Executive Director) and Victoria Sambursky (Program Director), and Board member Evie McNiff (Board President) using

formal interview protocols in mid-February, 2003. Dr. Alex Schuh of FRONTIER 21 also made a presentation to the entire CSFP Board on April 8, 2003 regarding the design and progress of the evaluation up to that point, and collected feedback on the study from Board members at that time.

FALL 2006 UPDATE ON PHASE II OF THE EVALUATION OF THE CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND PHILADELPHIA PROGRAM

September 15, 2006

The longitudinal evaluation of the CSFP scholarship program is concluding its second full year. This is a brief update on the results of the evaluation from year 2. The evaluation is being conducted by Dr. Alex Schuh of FRONTIER 21 Education Solutions. Since August 2004, the evaluation has been tracking 3 cohorts of CSFP scholarship recipients with the primary objective of understanding the program's impact on CSFP students' lives over the long term. The three cohorts of students are 2nd graders from school year 2004-05 (3rd graders in 2005-06), 5th graders from school year 2004-05 (6th graders in 2005-06), and 9th grade CSFP alumni from 2004-05 (10th graders in 2005-06).

The evaluation aims to: track the academic achievements and pathways of CSFP's scholarship recipients over the course of four years, provide CSFP with a database and a process for tracking students beyond the years of this study, and assess the needs of CSFP scholarship students and families for additional support services.

During the evaluation's second year, the evaluators continued the first year activities of tracking both elementary school and high school students' progress and participation in CSFP and other scholarship programs. This year, FRONTIER 21 was also asked to determine what types of schools students were attending when they completed the four year scholarship opportunity provided by CSFP. A brief overview of results from data collections from Year 2 are provided below.

Findings In Year 2

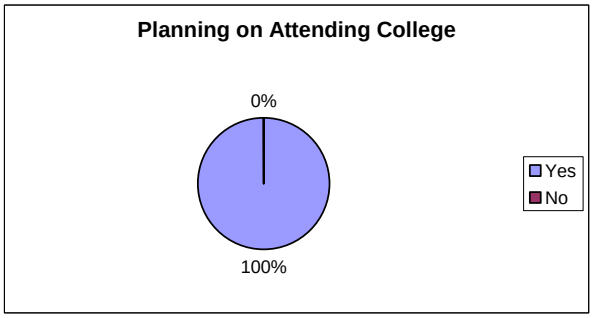
ALUMNI SURVEYS

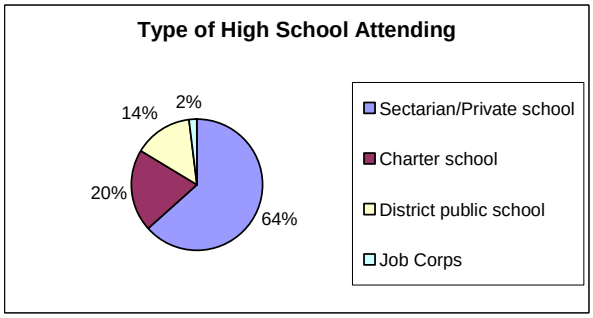
Phone surveys of CSFP alumni who left the program to enter high school in 2004 were conducted twice over the past year. Results from these surveys are provided below.

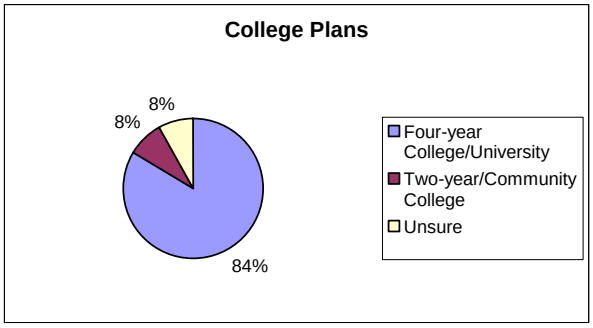
(NOTE: Results from 50 student respondents – summer 2006, 71 respondents fall 2005)

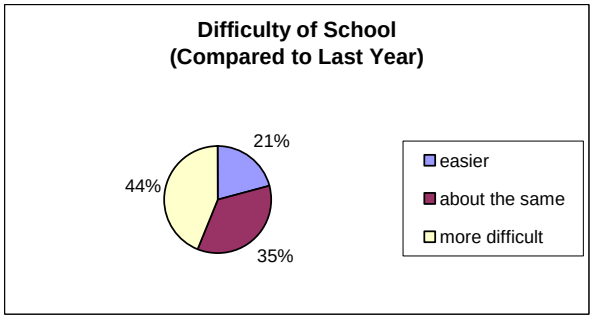
Average GPA= 3.0
Percent receiving scholarships= 40%
Percent in different school types: Charter (20%); Private/Sectarian (64%); Regular Public (14%); Job Corps (2%)
Percent in advanced/honors level classes= 20%
Percent in extra-curriculars= 65%
Percent returning to same school from previous year= 10%
Percent remaining in school through Sophomore year= 98%
Percent earning GED in Sophomore year= 2%
Percent planning to attend college= 100%
Plans to attend college- 2 Year College= 8%; 4 Year College= 84%; Unsure= 8%

Survey of High School Sophomore CSFP Alumni 2005-2006 School Year (N=71)









STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA

Standardized Test Scores 2005 and 2006

(From 334 students, 94 schools)

Test Area	**GRADE 3 COHORT in 2006**		**GRADE 6 COHORT in 2006**	
	% over 50th Percentile 2005	**% over 50th Percentile 2006**	% over 50th Percentile 2005	**% over 50th Percentile 2006**
Math	50	**55**	49	**49**
Reading	64	**63**	52	**54**
Language Use	47	**51**	49	**52**

[School District of Philadelphia 2006 –PSSA Math % Proficient and Advanced: 3rd Grade = 59%; 6th Grade=40%)]

[School District of Philadelphia 2006 –PSSA Reading % Proficient and Advanced: 3rd Grade = 42%; 6th Grade=36%)]

Average Daily Attendance – 3rd Grade Cohort (2005- 94%; 2006- 96%)

Average Daily Attendance – 6th Grade Cohort (2005- 91%; 2006- 93.5%)

[School District of Philadelphia (2005) average daily attendance in elementary schools= 90%]

Attrition of 3rd and 6th grade cohort from CSFP program, Spring 2005 to Spring 2006 = 63 out of 421= 15%

FOUR YEAR SCHOLARSHIP COMPLETERS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN POST-CSFP SCHOOL YEAR (Grade 8 and Below in 2006-07)*

Type of School Attending after CSFP Exit, 2006-07	Number	Percentage
Private	250	84.7%
Charter	4	1.4%
Homeschool	3	1.0%
Public	6	2.0%
Unknown	32	10.8%
TOTAL	295	100.0%
Private + Charter + Homeschool	**257**	**87.1%**

* Note: Does not include 25 9th graders exiting program in 2006.

Baseline Findings for an Evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) in Los Angeles

Denise D. Quigley, Ph.D.
CSF Evaluation Team
Evaluation & Research Services, Los Angeles

March 2006

Evaluation & Research Services
955 So. Westgate Ave
Los Angeles, CA. 90049
(310) 951-9592

Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) Evaluation Team
Denise D. Quigley, Evaluation Project Director

The research contained herein was commissioned by the Broad Foundation, as part of the evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund. Opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Children Scholarship Funds or the aforementioned private foundations.

BASELINE FINGINGS FOR AN

EVALUATION OF THE CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND – LOS ANGELES

Denise D. Quigley

Evaluation & Research Services, Los Angeles

1. INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

John Walton and Ted Forstmann launched Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) to an outpouring of demand from parents looking for better educational alternatives for their children in 1998. More than 70,000 children have benefited across the United States. In 2005, more than 24,000 children from low-income families are using CSF scholarships to attend the private school of their family's choice with approximately $30 million in CSF tuition assistance. Scholarships are awarded in various cities across the country. Recipients are attending more than 4,000 private and parochial schools (including Catholic, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Montessori and Independent schools) across the country through the generosity of CSF's donors, the efforts of 38 partner programs.

In 1999, the Broad Foundation pledged $1.6 million dollars for four years to the Los Angeles CSF to help low income children attend private school in Los Angeles. In addition, in 2000, Broad helped LA-CSF optimize its existing program by supporting an increase in the cap for students entering high school, and permitting approximately 400 siblings to join their elder brothers and sisters at their family's chosen school. To do this, Broad underwrote four-year scholarships for an additional 590 students.

Scholarships are determined by family size, income and tuition, so that the family pays what it can afford. But every family pays some portion of their tuition. The average annual income for all CSF recipients is $24,000 with the average family contribution is $1,360 and the average CSF scholarship is $1,220.

In Los Angeles, CSF currently provides tuition support to more than 1,550 children. Funds are raised locally and then matched by the national CSF organization, highly leveraging local support. Families must pay a minimum of $500

and scholarships are 25%, 50%, or 75% of tuition, depending upon family size and income, up to a maximum of $1,950. The average scholarship is $1,372 and the families pay an average of just under $26,000 towards their children's tuition. CSF scholarship recipients attend 281 private and parochial schools across the city, including Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and independent schools.

The evaluation of LA-CSF is important as it provides information about the effects of private school scholarship programs, which may have implications for school choice programs.

The evaluation approach involves an individual growth design that collects longitudinal data on student achievement scores and compares baseline scores against a student's own individual growth overtime on a given test. Overall, the evaluation assesses the effects of a student receiving funds from CSF and attending a private school on their standardized test score achievement growth overtime. The findings carry broader significance by expanding the information available about private school scholarship programs.

Organization of the Report

This report is divided into five sections. The first section has described the goals and context of the evaluation. Section 2 provides the methodology for the evaluation and the findings presented in the rest of the report.

Section 3 addresses the research questions of "What is the baseline achievement for the CSF and control students in third grade?" and "How does this compare to LAUSD students in third grade?" This section examines the California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition (CAT/6) test scores for the third grade year and compares these test scores to the LAUSD district as a whole, and Economically Disadvantaged students in LAUSD. The California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition (CAT/6), a norm-referenced test, was administered to LAUSD district students in Grades 3 and 7 in the spring of 2005 as part of the state's Standardized Testing and Reporting Data (STAR) system. In previous years, the CAT/6 was administered to students in Grades 2-11. This comparative analysis is conducted for the CSF study sample (N=99) and the sampled control students (N=281).

Section 4 addresses the question, "How similar is the randomly sampled control students to the CSF study sample at baseline?" This section compares demographic information, such as gender and ethnicity, at baseline to determine if

the CSF study sample and the sampled control students have statistically similar characteristics prior to the CSF recipients attending a private school with CSF funds. The final section summarizes and concludes.

2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND DESIGN

The evaluation is designed to study whether the academic achievement growth of CSF students is greater than that of students who remained in the public schools that the CSF students previously attended. Adopting a comparison group approach, the evaluation centers on the change in students individual growth over time from 3rd through 7th grade.

The evaluation approach integrates a longitudinal and a quasi-experimental design. The effects of CSF are being assessed primarily through a comparison group methodology of tracking student achievement growth over time. In the sections that follow, we provide a description of the methodology that delineates the evaluation design and explain the selection of the CSF sample and the control group sample.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation centers around four main evaluation questions:

1—What is the baseline achievement for the CSF and control students in third grade?

2—How similar are the randomly sampled control students to the CSF recipients at baseline?

3—What is the overtime achievement trend for the CSF recipients and control students?

4—Have the CSF students outperformed other students in the private schools? Or have the control students outperformed other economically disadvantaged students in LAUSD?

Questions 1 and 2 focus on the similarity of the control students and the program students, prior to the CSF program students entering a private school. Question 3 tracks the over time achievement of the CSF recipients and the control students and examines whether their growth is statistically significant. Question 4

investigates whether the CSF students are performing similarly to other private school students over time and whether the control students are performing similarly to other economically disadvantaged students in LAUSD over time.

This report will address Questions 1 and 2 and examine the similarity of the control and CSF recipient samples. Basic descriptive statistics are computed for program and control students. The difference between the Non-CSF and CSF student characteristics and 3rd grade test scores are tested for statistical significance (at the $p = 0.01$ level) using a chi-square test or ANOVA *t*-test, as appropriate. These tests indicate the probability that the observed differences are due to chance.

The overall evaluation of CSF LA is intended to answer these four questions and thereby assess whether CSF LA is achieving its goal of providing better learning opportunities for students in LA. However, the evaluation does not indicate whether private schools in general are more effective than public schools in improving student achievement from 3rd through 7th grade, nor does it indicate whether targeting families who seek out tuition support is more effective than other programmatic approaches.

The unit of analysis for the evaluation is the individual student. Analyses are conducted comparing Non-CSF and CSF groups of students.

Evaluation Design and Comparison Group Methodology

This evaluation, along with much social science research and evaluation work, is limited in the extent to which it can attribute connections between observed processes and conditions to observed effects since there are many uncontrolled variables likely to affect the outcomes in the targeted sites. Our evaluation design, however, uses quasi-experimental methods in addition to the longitudinal tracking of students to provide a solution to this problem.

This study utilizes a quasi-experimental design to collect longitudinal data on two groups of elementary students –all who begin in grades 3 though 5 until each student reaches 7th grade. One group, called the CSF cohort, received tuition support to attend a private school from CSF, while the second group, called the Non-CSF cohort, are public school students in schools that were previously attended by CSF recipients. This type of data allows us to describe the differences in student achievement growth across students in private schools with CSF support and students who remained in the public schools previously attended by CSF recipients,

and to test for the statistical significance of the overtime growth of the two populations of students.

Furthermore, this design makes a few assumptions. The design assumes that the concern is to evaluate how *all* CSF recipients who received funding in fall of 05 -- from the most to the least advantaged at the start of the program -- changed as a result of the CSF program.

Data Collection Procedures and Sample Selection

Student Achievement Data in Private and Public Schools

Available student achievement data over time is complicated in California by the changing tests and the changing policies concerning grade levels for which the test is administered. The following tests have been administered in the spring of the designated year:

Timeframe	Name of Standardized Test
1999 - present	CST- California Standards Test
1998 - 2002	SAT9 - Stanford 9 Test (norm referenced)
2003 - present	CAT/6 - California Achievement Test, Version 6

However, since the spring of 2005 the State of California has only required the CAT/6 to be administered to 3rd and 7th graders. The state is primarily relying on the CST, which cannot be used to measure test score growth or achievement overtime. As a result, the CSF evaluation of test score growth overtime is constrained by the limited availability of norm-referenced test score data for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in the Fall of 05 and thus the research questions it can answer for all three grade levels overtime. For example, the 3rd grade CSF students in the Fall 05 do not have prior year baseline CAT/6 information and therefore cannot be compared to a set of LAUSD control students. However, the CSF 4th and 5th grade students in the Fall of 05 had both taken the CAT/6 in their 3rd grade year and therefore, can be compared to a set of LAUSD control students as well as have their test scores tracked until 7th grade using the CAT/6.

Private schools, on the other hand, choose their own tests to administer to students. As part of the evaluation, CSF requested that private schools report to them the test they planned to administer in the 05/06 school year. The majority of private schools in the LA area are administering the norm-referenced Iowa Test for

Basic Skills (ITBS), while some are administering the norm-referenced Stanford 9 (or 10). The evaluation will track CSF recipients who have taken the ITBS or the Stanford Version 9 (or Version 10). Given that public schools no longer administer either of these norm-referenced tests, the control students test scores will be tracked using norm-referenced California Achievement Test (Version 6) (CAT/6).

Moreover, given the new testing policies of 2005 to only administer the CAT/6 test in 3rd and 7th grade, the evaluation will start tracking students who entered school in the 3rd, 4th or 5th grade in the fall of 05. For the 4th and 5th grade students, their third grade CAT/6 score can be used as their baseline score (prior to entering private school) and their achievement growth can be tracked for the yeas that the attend private school. Both control and program students will be tracked until the 7th grade, the grade that the state currently requires student testing of public school students. In sum, baseline comparisons can be made using third grade scores in reading and math on the CAT/6. Overtime student growth will be compared from 3rd to 7th grade for both the 4th and 5th grade cohorts of control students using the CAT/6 and from 4th to 7th grade and from 5th to 7th grade for the ITBS and SAT cohort of CSF recipients. If an equating study becomes available for the ITBS or the SAT9/10 to the CAT/6, then the control group's overtime student growth will also be compared to the CSF's overtime student growth from 3rd to 7th grade. Control students will also be compared to the average economically disadvantaged students in LAUSD and the CSF students will be compared to the average student in their private school.

Selection of the CSF Sample

The Children's Scholarship Fund provides tuition scholarships for students with demonstrated need who wish to attend private schools. In Fall 2005, CSF funded CSF recipients in grades K-5, and by design approx. 20 percent came from private schools and 80 percent came from public schools in Los Angeles.

For students in grades 3 – 5, 54 of the 156 students came from a private school and three were missing this information. As a result, the evaluation will track 99 CSF students in grades 3 through 5 who came from public schools in the fall of 2005. Of these 99 CSF students, the majority will be administered the Iowa Test for Basic Skills (ITBS) instead of the Stanford 9 (or Stanford 10). See the Table below for counts of students by grade). Students taking either the ITBS or the SAT9 will be included in the evaluation. These 99 students will be tracked until they each

respectively reach 7th grade. This will be in the school year 2008/09. The cohort of students taking the SAT9/SAT10 is too small to provide statistically significant results, but will be tracked for informational purposes. The sample size of the students taking the ITBS is sufficient to determine statistical differences over time and as compared to the Non-CSF control students.

Table 1: CSF Recipients from public schools entering private schools in Fall 2005
By Test Given at Private School

Test Type	Student Count	Student Count By Grade	Grade level
	N	N	
SAT9/SAT10	19		
		6	3rd
		3	4th
		10	5th
ITBS	80		
		34	3rd
		33	4th
		13	5th
Total	99	99	

Source: CSF final snapshot of application process for Fall 05 as of Oct 05

Selection of the Control Sample

During the application process, parents report the name of their student's previously attended school and whether it is public or private. Of the 99 CSF recipients in the sample, there were 51 reported previously attended public schools. CSF LA generated a count of all of the students grades K-5 who were receiving CSF tuition funding and had attended these 51 public schools. Of the 51 public schools, 11 schools had at least 6 or more confirmed CSF recipients who had previously attended the school (K-5). These 11 public schools were located across 7 of the 8 LAUSD sub-districts (There were no potential control school in District 1 in the valley). A potential control school was then recruited from each of the remaining sub-districts; however only five control schools were needed and were selected based on the principal agreeing to participate in the evaluation sampling. Five schools were selected, one in each of the LAUSD sub-districts 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The public control schools are to remain anonymous.

During November of 2005, a total of 283 students in grades 4 and 5 were randomly sampled from across the five control schools: 161 4th graders and 122 5th graders. At a given school, approx. 40 students were sampled for a given grade with

an even number of female and male students sampled across all classrooms in the school. Cumulative files were randomly selected from all 4th and 5th grade classrooms. When a student was sampled, demographic and test score information was recorded as well as the student's LAUSD ID for obtaining test score information in the future directly from the Los Angeles Unified School District's Information Technology Department.

3. BASELINE RESULTS: WHAT IS THE BASELINE ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE CSF AND CONTROL STUDENTS IN THIRD GRADE?

The CSF program provides tuition scholarships for students with demonstrated need who wish to attend private schools. In Fall 2005, CSF funded approx 99 CSF recipients in grades 3-5, who previously attended public school. A comparison group evaluation is based on comparing two groups, who were similar at baseline and testing whether the one group who received an intervention has different performance than the group that did not receive the intervention. For the CSF evaluation, there are 58 4th and 5th grade CSF recipients and 281 4th and 5th grade control students who have 3rd grade baseline test scores. In this section, we examine the CSF and Non-CSF students' third grade test scores on the California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition (CAT/6), which is prior to the CSF student's receiving CSF funding and attending private school. We compare both the scale score and the national curve equivalent (NCE) scores (See Table 2 and 3). Next, we compare the CSF and Non-CSF test scores to the LAUSD district as a whole, and to other Economically Disadvantaged students in LAUSD (See Table 4).

The CAT/6, a norm-referenced test, was administered to LAUSD district students in Grades 3 and 7 in the spring of 2005 as part of the state's Standardized Testing and Reporting Data (STAR) system. In previous years, the CAT/6 was administered to students in Grades 2-11.

We find that the CSF recipients and the control students do not differ in their reading and math scores in third grade; they have statistically similar scale scores and NCE scores in both reading and mathematics. Approximately an 11-point difference would be statistically significant for these two groups, with the t-statistic above 1.96. The average CSF student's scale score in reading is 597 and in Math is 591. The average control student's scale score in reading is 591 and in Math is 590. These differences are not statistically significant. Moreover, the average control

student and the CSF recipient perform similarly in math and reading to an average economically disadvantaged LAUSD third grade student, with a 602 in reading and 602 in math. The average LAUSD student in third grade performs higher on average in reading and math, as compared to the economically disadvantaged student, with a 607 in reading and 606 in math. This is what was expected given that CSF funds low-income students and students in need. In sum, the Non-CSF control students and the CSF recipient students performed similarly in 3rd grade in reading and math on the CAT/6. The CSF and Non-CSF students are also more similar to the economically disadvantaged students in LAUSD, than an average student in LAUSD.

Table 2: CAT/6 Scale Scores for third grade for the CSF program and control students

	Third Grade CAT/6 Mean Scale Score Reading	Third Grade CAT/6 Mean Scale Score Math
CSF Program students (N=53)	597.3	590.7
Control students (N=281)	591.1	590.3
Comparing Program vs. Control students: T-statistic	(0.45)	(0.21)

Note: * indicates p-value<=0.05; ** indicates p-value<=0.01; *** indicates p-value of <=0.001

Table 3: CAT/6 NCE Scores for third grade for the CSF program and control students

	Third Grade CAT/6 Mean NCE Score Reading	Third Grade CAT/6 Mean NCE Score Math
CSF Program students (N=58)	36.7	38.7
Control students (N=281)	32.4	41.1
Comparing Program vs. Control students: T-statistic	(0.72)	(-1.09)

Note: * indicates p-value<=0.05; ** indicates p-value<=0.01; *** indicates p-value of <=0.001

Table 4: CAT/6 Scale Scores for third grade for the CSF program and control students

	Third Grade CAT/6 Mean Scale Score Reading	Third Grade CAT/6 Mean Scale Score Math
CSF Program students (N=53)	597.3	590.7
Control students (N=281)	591.1	590.3
LAUSD students - Spring 05	606.6	606.4
LAUSD Economically Disadvantaged Students - Spring 05	601.9	601.6

Note: * indicates p-value<=0.05; ** indicates p-value<=0.01; *** indicates p-value of <=0.001
Source: LAUSD Ed Data, through www.lausd.net

4. BASELINE RESULTS: HOW SIMILAR ARE THE CONTROL STUDENTS TO THE CSF STUDENTS AT BASELINE?

It is important to also examine if demographic characteristics of the CSF and control students are similar at baseline. In this section we examine whether the CSF recipients and the control students have statistically similar characteristics prior to the CSF families choosing to send their child to a private school with CSF funds.

From the last section, we know that the CSF and control students in 4th and 5th grade are similar in terms of their third grade achievement on the CAT/6 in reading and math. Table 5 compares the two groups in terms of their gender, race, home language, and whether they received free and reduced lunch. We report the average household size and average household income of the CSF recipients; this information was not available for the control students. We report the average daily attendance in 3rd grade for the control students; this is however not available for the CSF recipients.

Overall, we find that the two groups are very similar. The control students are 51.9 percent male and the CSF students are 47.6 percent male. In terms of race, the control students are 83 percent Hispanic, 14 percent African American, 0.4 percent White and 2.5 percent Asian. The CSF students are 69.3 percent Hispanic, 28 percent African American and 2.6 percent White. This indicates that there are more African American students who receive CSF funding then attend their previous public school; no Asian students from these public schools have received a CSF tuition grant. However, these differences in racial composition are not statistically significant. Due to this difference in percent Hispanics, we will retroactively collect English Language Learner information about both groups to make sure that we capture any potential variation. Additionally, both the CSF and Control groups have 29 percent speaking Spanish in the home.

Nearly all the students in both groups were receiving free and reduced lunch in public school, 97.9 and 100 percent respectively. The CSF student has on average 3.9 people in the household and has an average household income of $22,473. The average household income for all of the CSF-LA recipient families is $26,000. The control students also had an average daily attendance at school in the third grade of 162 days out of 170. The attendance data was not available for the CSF students. Finally, all off these statistics were run also by grade level and not statistical differences were found across the groups.

This data indicates the sampled control students and the Fall 05 CSF recipients in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade are similar in terms of demographic characteristics and in terms of their third grade performance in reading and math. This indicates that the comparative quality of the control group and the CSF sample are high and should provide a good basis for comparison in the future.

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of CSF program and control students

	CSF Students (N=99)	Control Students (N=283)
Percent male	47.6	51.9
Ethnicity: Percent Hispanic	69.3	83.0
Percent African American	28.0	14.1
Percent White	2.6	0.4
Percent Asian	0.0	2.5
Home Language: Percent Spanish	29.3	29.7
Percent Receiving Free Reduced Lunch	97.9	100
Average Household size	3.9 people	Not Available
Average Household income	$22,473	Not Available
Average Daily Attendance in 3rd grade	Not Available	162 days

Note: * indicates p-value<=0.05; ** indicates p-value<=0.01; *** indicates p-value of <=0.001

5. CONCLUSION

This evaluation is designed to study the whether the academic achievement growth of CSF students overtime is greater than that of students who remained in the public schools that the CSF recipients had previously attended. Adopting a comparison group approach, the evaluation centers on the change in students individual growth over time from 3rd through 7th grade.

The evaluation includes all of the CSF students in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade in the fall of 05 who previously attended a pubic school in Los Angeles. A group of control students were sample from the schools that these CSF recipients previously attended. This report compares the two groups to determine their similarity in 3rd grade, prior to CSF. In sum, we found that the two groups are statistically similar in terms of their third grade performance in reading and math on the CAT/6 as well as in terms of their demographic characteristics, such as race, home language, gender, and poverty status. This indicates that the comparative quality of the control group and the CSF sample are high and should provide a good basis for comparison in the future.

The evaluation is limited in several aspects. First, public and private schools administer different standardized tests. Private schools are primarily administering the ITBS or the SAT 9, while public schools are administering the CAT/6. This limits the analysis to comparing individual student achievement growth over time and does not allow for comparing the average growth of the groups to each other. Second, the sample size of the CSF recipients is small, albeit it is the census sample. If there is substantial or even moderate attrition from the CSF program, then it may not be possible to determine small effects in the test scores overtime. The control samples are sufficiently large even accounting for attrition.

Most importantly, the control and program groups are similar across key background characteristics, such as gender and poverty, and also in terms of academic performance, specifically third grade performance in reading and math.

KIDSFIRST SCHOLARSHIP FUND
2005 8TH GRADE TEST RESULTS

Recipients of KidsFirst scholarships perform remarkably well on the eighth grade Basic Skills tests for math and reading, as you can see by the graph below. The test results are obtained directly from the school. KidsFirst will continue tracking these students to see how well they do in high school. During the 2005-2006 school year we will have KidsFirst graduates at every level of high school. Each year we talk to the parents to learn of the progress the student is making.

Eighth Grade Test Results
Percentage Passing the Minnesota Basic Skills Test

8th Grade Students	Math	Reading
2005 KidsFirst Eighth Grade Graduates	**85%**	**91%**
Minneapolis School District	**48%**	**64%**
St. Paul School District	**48%**	**65%**

*** Statistics taken from the Minnesota Dept. of Education**

KIDSFIRST SCHOLARSHIP FUND
GRADUATION SURVEY RESULTS 2006

KidsFirst (Minneapolis) provides scholarships to low-income youth in grades K-8 and was established in 1998. We have managed to track our first class of 8th grade program graduates that are graduating from high school in June, 2006. In order for us to obtain these results, KidsFirst tracked these program alumni for four years. We are pleased to report that KidsFirst has managed to track 39 of 44 of the graduates. Of those tracked, 35 students (90%) elected to participate in the following survey highlighting their post-high school plans. The results are listed below:

Post-High School Plans	# of Students	% of Students
College	28	79%
Technical School	3	9%
Undecided (College or Tech)	1	3%
National Guard	1	3%
Not Graduating	2	6%
Total	**35**	**100%**

Children's Scholarship Fund

giving parents a choice ◆ giving children a chance

New Orleans

Parent Survey

2003

8 West 38th Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10018

CONTENTS

I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Basic Findings

- Among families with students who are eligible to continue their scholarships for a fifth year, the majority are very satisfied with the education CSF scholarships help them attain.
- Parents rated the CSF program and its administration very highly and expressed enthusiasm at the continuation of the program into its fifth year.

Demographics

- The majority (70%) of CSF families participating in the New Orleans program are African-American.
- 85% of scholarship recipient families live and attend school in either Orleans or Jefferson Parish.
- African-American recipient families tend to receive greater scholarship percentages than their Caucasian counterparts.

Evaluating the Program

- The majority of parents took cost, religious affiliation, and location into consideration when selecting a school for their children.
- Parents were generally very satisfied with the academic quality, safety, discipline, and teaching values they found at the schools they chose for their children
- Parents were very happy with the overall quality of their children's experience at the school and with their own interaction with the teachers and school administrators
- Seventy-nine percent of parents intend to choose the same school for their children next year.
- The vast majority of parents noticed improvement in their children in the key areas of academic performance, social skills, and behavior since their children began attending their current private school.
- At least 89% of parents reported that each of the following was not a problem in their child's private school: fighting, cheating, racial conflict, stealing, gangs, guns, and drugs.

Public vs. Private School

- Among families whose children had attended public school before receiving a scholarship, the majority were moderately satisfied or dissatisfied with their children's public schools.
- Parents rated the private schools to which they sent their children using CSF scholarships much more highly in academic quality, safety, discipline, and teaching values than they rated the public schools their children previously attended.
- Parents believe their children have had an overall more positive experience in their current private schools than in the public schools their children previously attended. Parents also reported significantly higher incidences of problems at public schools than at private schools, including fighting, cheating, racial conflict, and stealing.

II

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) was established as a national private scholarship program for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. In addition to the nationwide scholarship program, more than 35 local programs were established or became affiliated with CSF, among them the CSF New Orleans program.

At the beginning of the 2002–2003 school year (the final year of the original scholarship) 939 students were receiving assistance through the New Orleans program. Nearly 70%, or 645 of the students in the program will be entering Kindergarten through 8th grade in the 2003-2004 school year. Assuming there is sufficient funding, these students will be eligible to extend their awards through 8th grade and were notified of this in March of 2003. CSF and the Archdiocese of New Orleans are working to secure the funding necessary to continue these awards.

In the interest of assessing the program's effectiveness, the recipient parents' experiences with public and private schools, and in an attempt to establish a more detailed understanding of the demographics of the program, a parental survey (Appendix A) and cover letter (Appendix B) were mailed to each of the 465 families of the eligible students. Parents were given three weeks to return the two-page survey to CSF offices in New York.

CSF received completed surveys from 226 families, a response rate of almost 49%. The CSF staff processed all responses and analyzed the data, using a customized Microsoft Access database containing address and household income information already verified by CSF for the administration of the scholarship program. This allowed CSF both to update contact information on file for these families and to prevent the inclusion of duplicate responses or responses from individuals who did not receive the survey.

This was the first time CSF had attempted a comprehensive survey of its New Orleans program recipients. The survey's questions were designed to answer four main questions:

- What was the demographic composition of the New Orleans recipient population?
- Were parents satisfied with the job the program was doing in fulfilling its mission of expanding educational opportunity?
- Were parents satisfied with the way the private schools they had chosen were educating their children?
- Had the scholarship helped to provide a better education for those students who had previously attended public school prior to receiving a scholarship?

The level of parental participation in the survey exceeded that of similar program surveys undertaken in prior years, and in conjunction with CSF's research, allowed for meaningful evaluation and analysis of the results.

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III

DEMOGRAPHICS

Educational Origins

More than 29,000 applications were submitted for the New Orleans program at its inception in 1999. Nearly 2,900 of these low-income families were randomly selected by lottery and offered four-year scholarship awards. Among these families, approximately 70% had children who attended public school at the time they submitted their application. From among these families, 1,378 scholarships were awarded to the eligible families who completed the application process; 760, or 55% of these students had previously attended public school, while the remaining 618 (45%) had attended private school.

Figure 1 **2002 - 2003 Recipient Distribution (by Residence)**

Families	Percentage	
126	27.1%	Jefferson Parish
282	60.6%	Orleans Parish
7	1.5%	Plaquemines Parish
17	3.7%	St. Bernard Parish
1	0.2%	St. Charles Parish
1	0.2%	St. James Parish
24	5.2%	St. John the Baptist Parish
7	1.5%	St. Tammany Parish

Figure 2 **2002 - 2003 Recipient Distribution (by School Attended)**

Students	Percentage	
180	28.1%	Jefferson Parish
383	59.8%	Orleans Parish
8	1.3%	Plaquemines Parish
28	4.4%	St. Bernard Parish
3	0.5%	St. Charles Parish
1	0.2%	St. James Parish
29	4.5%	St. John the Baptist Parish
8	1.3%	St. Tammany Parish

Among the 2003 survey's respondents, 82 parents (36%) indicated that their children had attended public school prior to receiving a scholarship. Another 143 (63%) indicated that their children attended private school, and 1 parent did not answer the question. A comprehensive examination of attrition across CSF programs nationwide in 2002 indicated that after the first year of the scholarship, 82% of children who came from private schools returned for a second year, while only 73% of those who came from public school returned. In the second year of the program, retention rates for students from private and public schools were 77% and 71% respectively. This is not only due to the fact that parents who have children in private schools are more familiar with the way in which such schools work, but also because they already understand the financial obligations such schools require of their families.

It is therefore not surprising to find that the balance of respondents remaining in the program after the first four years had previously sent their children to private school. The cumulative effect of the difference in retention rates between those whose children attended private school and those whose children attended public school accounts for the increasing percentage of students from private school. Furthermore, CSF allowed the addition of siblings to the program in later years who were too young to participate in 1999. (Siblings joined at a rate of roughly 5% of the returning population each year). Over the course of four years, the likelihood that these siblings were from families who had previously sent their children to private school increased accordingly.

Geographical Distribution

Scholarship recipient families reside throughout the parishes that the New Orleans program covers with significant concentrations in the Orleans and Jefferson parishes (Figure 1), and the schools which scholarship recipients choose to attend closely mirror their families' places of residence (Figure 2). Because of the very small number of respondents in Plaquemines (5), St. Bernard (7), St. Charles (1), St. John the Baptist (10), and St. Tammany (6) parishes, CSF chose not to analyze further the demographic data from these areas in greater detail.

Figure 3

Annual Income Eligibility Scale for 2002-2003 School Year

Maximum Income Based on 2001 Adjusted Gross Income

Household Size	Up to 75% Tuition (100% Poverty)	Up to 50% Tuition (185% Poverty) *(Eligible for Reduced School Lunch Program)*	Up to 25% Tuition (270% Poverty)
2	$11,610	$21,479	$31,347
3	$14,630	$27,066	$39,501
4	$17,650	$32,653	$47,655
5	$20,670	$38,240	$55,809
	For each additional child add $3,020	*For each additional child add $5,587*	*For each additional child add $8,154*

Distribution by Race

CSF was specifically designed as an *opportunity* scholarship program whose only criteria were residency and income level. Prior to this survey, CSF had not tracked the race of recipients in the New Orleans program.

The responses revealed that almost 70%, or 157 of the families in the program were African-American. About 24% of the respondents indicated that they were Caucasian, while 11 families indicated that they were Asian (1), Hispanic (5), or "Other" (5). Four families did not answer this question. These findings are consistent with other CSF urban program surveys conducted in the past, which indicate that recipient families' ethnic backgrounds tend to reflect the major low-income groups within the program's geographical coverage.

Figure 4

2002 - 2003 Recipient Award Percentage By Race

	25%		50%		75%	
	Total	**Percentage:**	**Total**	**Percentage:**	**Total**	**Percentage:**
African- American:	14	35.9%	78	75.7%	65	77.4%
Asian:	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Caucasian:	23	59.0%	17	16.5%	14	16.7%
Hispanic:	1	2.6%	3	2.9%	1	1.2%
Not specified:	1	2.6%	2	1.9%	1	1.2%
Other:	0	0.0%	3	2.9%	2	2.4%

The significant concentration of families eligible for a fifth year of scholarship assistance living in Orleans and Jefferson parishes prohibited more detailed analysis or comparison of the responses on a parish-by-parish basis. Therefore, CSF analyzed both demographic and parental satisfaction data only on on a program-wide basis.

Looking at the program as a whole, it appeared that among respondents African-American recipients qualified in greater numbers for larger scholarships than did their Caucasian counterparts.

CSF scholarships are awarded on a sliding scale. Based upon the annually published United States Department of Agriculture guidelines for free and reduced lunches, scholarship recipients may qualify for 25%, 50%, or 75% scholarship awards, up to a maximum of $1,850 per child (Figure 3). (CSF annually adjusts the scale as well as the maximum scholarship award amount to account for inflation.)

Using the income and household size information for each recipient already verified by CSF and stored in CSF's scholarship database, an analysis of the respondents' scholarship eligibility levels indicated that African-American recipients qualified for 50% and 75% scholarships at a rate between 5% and 7% higher than their overall rate of participation in the program. Caucasian recipients, who accounted for about 24% of the program as a whole, qualified in greater numbers for 25% scholarships, and in proportionately lower numbers for 50% and 75% scholarships. The low number of Asian, and Hispanic respondents, as well as those who specified their race as "Other", made meaningful analysis of scholarship percentage trends in these groups impossible (Figure 4).

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IV

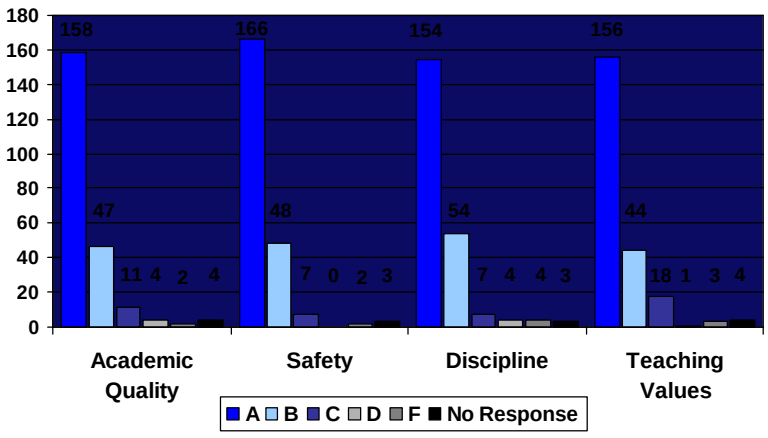
EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

What factors influence a parent's choice of school?

A cornerstone of the CSF scholarship program is that parents may use their scholarship award at any legally operating private school. While CSF offers support and information to parents in their efforts to find the best possible school for their children, it has never urged parents to choose individual schools, or schools of a specific type. When asked to select the reason they chose their child's current school, 135 parents, or 59.7% indicated that the location of the school was a factor in their decision. Another 113, or 50% indicated that the school's religious affiliation was a major factor, and 73 (32.3%) indicated that the school's tuition influenced their decision. (See Appendix C for an analysis of the religious affiliations of the schools current New Orleans program recipients attend.) Additionally, 2.6% of parents indicated that other factors, ranging from the school's reputation to the fact that a relative had attended, played a role in their choice of school.

Interestingly, nearly 76% of parents selected Catholic schools for their students during the 2002--2003 school year. The next most-selected school type was Christian schools (not affiliated with a specific denomination), which nearly 11% of recipients attended. Lutheran and Baptist schools accounted for 4.5% and 3.5% of students respectively, with no other school type accounting for more than 2.5%.

Figure 5



Parents evaluate the schools they have chosen

One of the major objectives of this survey was to learn whether parents were indeed happy with the private schools they had chosen for their children. The survey revealed that the vast majority of parents were very satisfied with the schools their children attended in the key areas of academic quality, safety, discipline, and teaching values. (Figure 5).

When asked to grade their overall impression of their children's schools, 60.6% rated their child's experience as an "A". About 28% rated it a "B", 8% rated it a "C", slightly over 1% as a "D" and only 1 parent gave a school a failing grade. Four parents declined to answer this question.

Parents were similarly impressed with the quality of their own interaction with the teachers and administrators of their child's school. Fifty-nine percent rated this interaction as an "A", and 28% as a "B". Only 8% rated their experience as a "C", 2% as a "D", and 1% rated it an "F". Again, 4 parents declined to answer this question.

CSF identified seven major problems in schools as detrimental to a child's education, and asked whether parents were aware of problems in their children's schools in the following areas: fighting, cheating, racial conflict, stealing, gangs, guns, and drugs (Figure 6). Fighting proved to be the most prevalent, but even in this case, only 8% of

parents cited it as a problem at their child's school.

CSF also asked parents whether they were proud of their child's school, a key indicator of overall satisfaction with their children's educational experience. More than 91% (206 respondents) indicated that they were indeed proud of the school, while only 16% (37) were not. Ten parents (4.4%) did not respond.

Improvement:

Even more encouraging was the perception on the part of recipient parents that their children had improved in the key areas of academic performance, social skills, and behavior since attending their current school (Figure 7). Many of the parents who selected "no" or did not respond to the questions indicated that their child already possessed exceptional skills in these areas.

Figure 6 **Problems at private schools (as reported by parents overall)**

Responses to "Are any of the following a problem at your child's current school?"

	Yes		No		No Response	
Fighting:	18	8%	202	89%	6	3%
Cheating:	2	1%	217	96%	7	3%
Racial Conflict:	7	3%	209	92%	10	4%
Stealing:	8	4%	211	93%	7	3%
Gangs:	2	1%	218	96%	6	3%
Guns:	0	0%	220	97%	6	3%
Drugs:	2	1%	217	96%	7	3%

Students returning next year to their current schools:

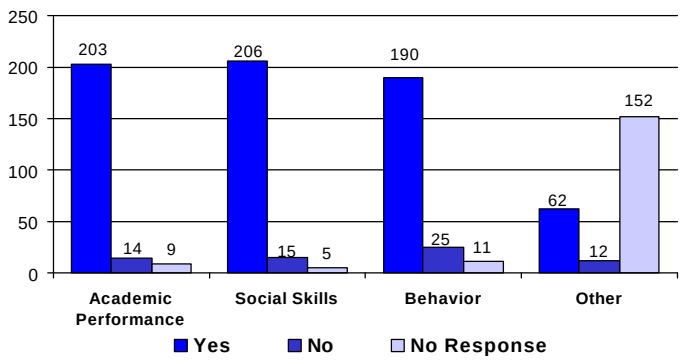
Another indication of parents' satisfaction with their children's educational experience is their desire to continue their children's education at the school they have chosen. (Recipients may be using their scholarships to defray tuition expenses at any legally operating private school, but can choose another private school at any point and transfer their scholarships to the new school.) Despite this inherent freedom of movement, in the case of the New Orleans program, 179, or 79% of parents planned to send their children to the same school for the 2003–2004 school year. 37 parents, or 16% indicated that they planned to send their children to a different school, for reasons including the closing of their child's current school, an upcoming move, the child's pending graduation from the highest grade offered by the current school, and dissatisfaction with their current school. About 4% (10 parents) chose to not answer this question.

Parents evaluate CSF

CSF make every effort to accommodate the unique circumstances and respond to the various challenges parents face in pursuing the best possible education for their children. The survey's final question asked parents to rate their overall experience with CSF over the four-year history of the program. The parents' response was universally positive, with 97% indicating that they would rate their experience with CSF as an "A". Six parents, or 3% indicated that they would rate their experience a "B", and 2 did not answer the question. No grades of "C", "D", or "F" were given to CSF.

Scholarship recipient families had an average of approximately 1.5 recipient children with a household income of just $20,267 during the 2002 – 2003 tax year. On average, parents paid $1,293 to send each of their children to school even after CSF scholarship assistance. For parents who were anticipating spending the upcoming year struggling to make up for scholarship assistance, as well as for those who would be forced to send their children to public school at the conclusion of the scholarship, the extension

Figure 7 **Student improvement (as reported by parents overall)**



of scholarships was most welcome news.

Further anecdotal evidence of this fact appeared in the final section of the survey, which offered parents the opportunity to share additional comments on the scholarship program. The majority of comments consisted of expressions of gratitude for the extension of the scholarships. Several parents expressed the desire for the program to continue beyond the one-year extension, and others expressed regret that the program would not be able to accommodate older siblings who will be in high school during the 2003–2004 school year.

The opinions parents expressed about their children's current schools, their interaction with CSF, and the overall quality of the education their children are receiving were similar regardless of whether the children had attended public or private school before receiving a scholarship. The following section compares parental experiences at the children's current private school with their experiences at the public schools the children formerly attended.

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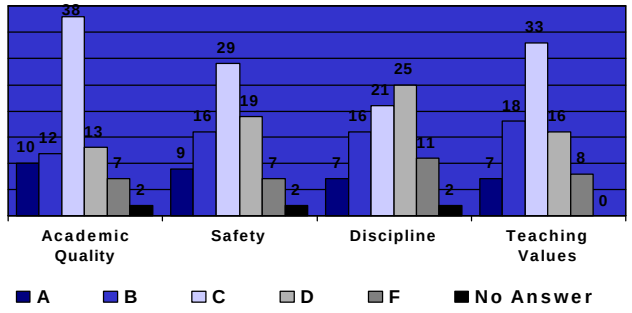
V

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE SCHOOL

Among the 82 parents whose children had previously attended public school, the vast majority were more satisfied with their experiences with the private schools their children now attended. CSF did not directly ask parents to compare private schools with public schools, but again focused on the areas in which the quality of the children's educational experience could best be evaluated. Parents with students who had attended public school were asked to evaluate those schools in the same vital areas as the private schools their children now attended. Specifically, they were asked to rate their child's overall experience with the school, their own interaction with teachers and administrators, the school's academic quality, safety, discipline, and teaching values. Parents were also asked to indicate if the same problems which can negatively affect a child's education were present in the public schools they were evaluating.

Figure 8 **Parents rate their children's original public schools**



Generally, the results indicated that parents' experiences with the public school system were judged to be significantly less satisfactory than their experiences with the private school system. On the broadest level, only 12% of parents gave their child's experience an "A" overall. Another 17% rated it a "B", while the largest group, almost 30%, rated it a "C". This was closely followed by those who rated the experience a "D" (27%); 13% gave the school a failing grade.

These same parents were significantly more satisfied overall with their child's current school. When asked to rate their child's current school, 55% (45 respondents) rated the school as an "A". Thirty-two percent (26) gave the school a "B", 10% (8) gave it a "C". Only one parent gave a grade of "D", one an "F", and one parent did not answer.

Parents were similarly unimpressed with the administrators and teachers at their children's public schools. While one parent declined to answer the question, the largest percentage of parents (30%) also gave their interaction with teachers and administrators a "C". Only 9 parents, just under 11%, rated the experience an "A", while just over 25% (21 parents) gave it a "B". Seventeen parents, or 21% rated the experience a "D", and another 11% (9 parents) gave a failing grade.

Parents indicated that their experiences with private school teachers and administrators were significantly more positive. More than half (54%, or 44 respondents) rated their interaction as an "A", followed by 26 (32%) who gave it a "B". Ten percent (8) gave it a "C", with 2 and 1 giving it a "D" and "F" respectively. Again, one parent did not answer this question.

Another key measure of overall parental satisfaction with their children's school is parental pride in the school. When asked whether they were proud of their child's

Figure 9 **Overall grades: public vs. private school**

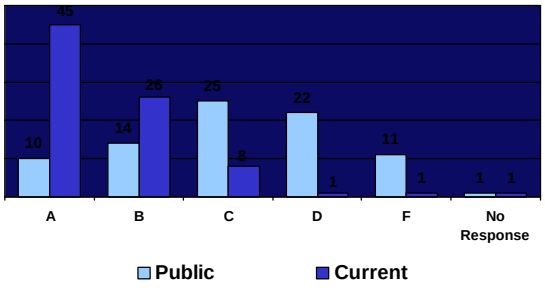


Figure 10 **Problems in public schools (as reported by parents)**

	Yes		No		No Response	
Fighting:	51	62%	30	37%	1	1%
Cheating:	23	28%	58	71%	1	1%
Racial Conflict:	18	22%	64	78%	0	0%
Stealing:	30	37%	49	60%	3	4%
Gangs:	8	10%	72	88%	2	2%
Guns:	2	2%	77	94%	3	4%
Drugs:	4	5%	76	93%	2	2%

Figure 11 **Problems in private schools (as reported by parents)**

	Yes		No		No Response	
Fighting:	10	12%	69	84%	3	4%
Cheating:	1	1%	77	94%	4	5%
Racial Conflict:	2	2%	76	93%	4	5%
Stealing:	7	9%	71	87%	4	5%
Gangs:	1	1%	78	95%	3	4%
Guns:	0	0%	79	96%	3	4%
Drugs:	0	0%	79	96%	3	4%

private school, fully 90% of parents indicated that they were proud. Only 7% indicated that they were not, and 2 parents did not answer. When asked the same question about their children's former public school, only 26% indicated that they were proud of it. Almost 71% said that they were not, with another 3 choosing not to answer.

It appears that parents had little to be proud of at their children's public schools. Significant numbers of parents indicated that cheating, racial conflict, and stealing were problems at these schools, while more than 60% indicated that fighting was a problem. Only 12% indicated that fighting was a problem at the private schools their children attended, and no more than 9% of parents indicated that stealing, racial conflict, and cheating were problems (Figures 10 & 11).

Beyond the overall absence of negative influences such as the above in private schools, parents indicated that they have seen improvements in their children in the important areas of academic performance, social skills, and behavior. At least 87% of parents reported seeing improvements in these children in each of these categories. Thirty-seven percent of parents also reported other improvements.

It is therefore not surprising that more than 73% (60 respondents) of these parents planned to send their children to the same schools during the 2003 – 2004 school year. Parents viewed the private schools they had selected as capable of offering a safe and effective learning environment which is not only able to offer an excellent education to their children, but also capable of both personally and academically creating perceptible improvements in their children to a far greater degree than the public schools their children had previously attended.

Not surprisingly, when asked to rate the CSF program these parents followed the overall trend among respondents, with 95% giving CSF an "A", and 4% a "B". One parent did not respond to this question.

• • •

VI

CONCLUSION

One of the greatest challenges facing private scholarship foundations is determining whether the program is effective in accomplishing its mission. For many families, a scholarship from the Children's Scholarship Fund represents an opportunity to send their children to a school they could not otherwise afford, and it is to be expected that many would be grateful for such an opportunity. But among the recipients in the CSF New Orleans program, it is clear not only that parents are grateful for this opportunity, but also that they see definite improvements in their children's educational experiences at the schools they choose.

Parents who were formerly disappointed by, or, at best, lukewarm toward the public schools their children attended and toward the teachers and administrators at these schools, were significantly more positive and even enthusiastic about the experiences they and their children had at the private schools they chose. From overall school evaluations to perceived improvements in their children, parents indicated that the private schools they selected were more effective, safer, better and had far fewer problems than the public schools their children had attended in the past. For the parents of children who attended private school before receiving a CSF scholarship, the additional assistance helped them to continue sending their children to schools that are having an almost universally positive impact on their children.

Although CSF has not to date conducted comprehensive evaluations of the impact the program has had on the standardized test scores of recipients, it has determined that parents are happy with the program's structure and the educational opportunities it offers recipients. Children who receive scholarships are able to attend superior schools that parents can be proud of, and are able to learn in safer environments with the guidance of teachers and school administrators who are able to interact positively with parents. Parents were overwhelmingly proud of the private schools their children attended, and very happy with their experience with CSF itself. Based on the responses of the parents whose children will be continuing into a fifth year of private school with CSF assistance, the program is effective and does fulfill its mission of expanding educational opportunities for children who would not otherwise have had the chance to attend the school of their choice.

• • •

Appendix A: Survey

Children's Scholarship Fund
giving parents a choice • giving children a chance
New Orleans

Parent Survey

Return by **May 30, 2003** to:
Children's Scholarship Fund
8 West 38th St., 9th Floor
New York, New York 10018
Phone: (212) 515-7137
Fax: (212) 750-2840

Please complete this form to help us learn more about your experience with the Children's Scholarship Fund and your child's school experience. (If you have children attending different schools, please complete a *separate* survey for *each* school.)

1. Parent/Guardian Name: _____
   First Name Middle Initial or Name Last Name

2. Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

3. Home Phone: ( ) _____ Work Phone: ( ) _____

4. Number of Children in Program (please circle): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

5. Race (please circle): Asian African-American Caucasian Hispanic Other:

6. Did your child attend public school before receiving a scholarship? Yes No

7. **If you answered "no" to Question 6, please skip to Question 12.** If you answered "yes" to Question 6, please circle the grade you would give your child's original public school on the following factors:

Academic Quality:	A	B	C	D	F
Safety:	A	B	C	D	F
Discipline:	A	B	C	D	F
Teaching Values:	A	B	C	D	F

8. Please circle the grade you would give your child's overall experience at his/her public school:

A B C D F

9. Please circle the grade you would give your interaction with the teachers and administrators at your child's public school:

A B C D F

10. Were any of the following things a problem at your child's public school?

Fighting:	Yes	No
Cheating:	Yes	No
Racial Conflict:	Yes	No
Stealing:	Yes	No
Gangs:	Yes	No
Guns:	Yes	No
Drugs:	Yes	No

11. Were you proud of your child's public school? Yes No

(OVER)

12. Name of child's current private school:

13. What made you choose this school for your child? (Circle all that apply.)

Location Cost of Tuition Religious Affiliation Other:

14. Please circle the grade you would give your child's current school on the following factors:

Academic Quality:	A	B	C	D	F
Safety:	A	B	C	D	F
Discipline:	A	B	C	D	F
Teaching Values:	A	B	C	D	F

15. Please circle the grade you would give your child's overall experience at his/her current school:

A B C D F

16. Please circle the grade you would give your interaction with the teachers and administrators at your child's current school:

A B C D F

17. Are any of the following things a problem at your child's current school?

Fighting:	Yes	No
Cheating:	Yes	No
Racial Conflict:	Yes	No
Stealing:	Yes	No
Gangs:	Yes	No
Guns:	Yes	No
Drugs:	Yes	No

18. Are you proud of your child's current school? Yes No

19. Since your child started at his/her current school, have you seen an improvement in him/her in the following areas?

Academic performance:	Yes	No
Social skills:	Yes	No
Behavior:	Yes	No
Other :	Yes	No

20. Will your child be returning to his/her school next fall? Yes No
If not, why not?

21. Please circle the grade you would give your experience with the Children's Scholarship Fund:

A B C D F

22. Would you be willing to talk to someone from the Children's Scholarship Fund in greater detail about your answers to these survey questions? Yes No

Please feel free to add any additional comments you would like to share with us:

We thank you for your cooperation in filling out this survey.

Appendix B: Text of Survey Cover Letter mailed to all families eligible for 5th year extension

[LOGO]

[MONTH/DD/YYYY]

Mr./Ms. [PARENT]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP]

Dear [PARENT],

The Children's Scholarship Fund is dedicated to giving you a choice in your children's education, and giving your children a chance to learn in the environment that you decide is best for them. We want to take this opportunity to learn about your experiences with the Children's Scholarship Fund and with the schools we help your children attend over the last four years. This information is very important to us not only in our assessment of the effectiveness of our administration of the program, but also in our assessment of the effectiveness of the scholarships themselves.

Please take a moment to complete the enclosed survey. (This is a different survey from the one you may have already received, and we hope that you will give us the opportunity to learn a bit more about your experiences. Please return it to us in the envelope provided, or fax both sides to us at (212) 750-2840 by June 30th, 2003.

On behalf of the Children's Scholarship Fund and its staff, I thank you for your help in this matter and look forward to continuing to serve you through the 2003 – 2004 school year.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Esposito

Appendix C: Religious affiliations of schools for 2002/2003 among New Orleans program scholarship recipients surveyed

Affiliation	Number of Schools	Number of Students
Roman Catholic	72	468
Christian (no specific denomination)	22	73
Baptist	7	30
Other nonreligious	7	21
Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod	5	34
Assembly of God	2	5
Episcopal	2	2
Nonreligious, for exceptional children	2	3
Nonreligious, Montessori	2	7
Seventh-Day Adventist	1	2
TOTAL:	**122**	**645**

Religious affiliations of schools for 2002/2003 among New Orleans program scholarship recipients surveyed (as percentages)

Affiliation	% of Schools	% of Students
Roman Catholic	59.0%	72.6%
Christian (no specific denomination)	18.0%	11.3%
Baptist	5.7%	4.7%
Other nonreligious	5.7%	3.3%
Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod	4.1%	5.3%
Assembly of God	1.6%	0.8%
Episcopal	1.6%	0.3%
Nonreligious, for exceptional children	1.6%	0.5%
Nonreligious, Montessori	1.6%	1.1%
Seventh-Day Adventist	0.8%	0.3%

A Summary Report on the Findings of an Evaluation Survey Conducted by The Children's Scholarship Fund – New York City of its Participating Families and Schools

by
Brooke D. Holzer
Associate Program Director
Children's Scholarship Fund – New York City

August 2001

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The Children's Scholarship Fund – New York City (CSF– NYC) is one of 44 national program offices associated with the Children's Scholarship Fund, a not-for-profit organization founded by Theodore Forstmann and John Walton in 1999. The mission of CSF is "to maximize educational opportunity at all income levels by offering tuition assistance for needy families and promoting a diverse and competitive educational environment."

In 1999 and 2001, Paul E. Peterson and his colleagues conducted two separate studies to ascertain how parents and students feel about the experience of attending a private school through a privately funded scholarship program. Both studies were conducted under the auspices of Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG). The first study evaluated programs in three cities, all of which operated in a manner similar to CSF-NYC; they were: Parents Advancing Choice in Education in Dayton, OH, the School Choice Scholarships Foundation in New York City, and the Washington Scholarship Fund in Washington, DC.[1] The second study evaluated a random sample of families who applied for a CSF scholarship; both families who were offered a scholarship and families who were not were included in the sample.[2]

Because the second study looked at only CSF programs, including families from the NYC area, we in the CSF-NYC program office were interested in seeing if our families, as a distinct group, held the same attitudes as the national pool, as well as evaluate the experiences that the schools were having with the CSF-NYC families and staff. To this end, we conducted a survey of all of our active families and all of our schools, the findings of which make up this report. There is also additional information regarding our attrition numbers since inception.

Methodology

A two-page survey was sent to all CSF-NYC parents with an "Active" status, indicating that their child or children were currently enrolled and attending a private school through our program. Families were asked to complete one form *per school* that their children attended and to mail or fax them back to our office. Out of 2,255 Active families, we had 786 forms returned to our office (a return rate of 34.9%).

A separate two-page survey was also sent to all schools with CSF-NYC students enrolled in them. We utilized the help of four of our New York City Outreach Board members, each of whom represented a religious school constituency, in sending the surveys out to the principals of their respective religious schools: Catherine Hickey (Archdiocese of New York), Deborah Jacob (Agudeth Israel), Marlene Lund (Lutheran Schools Association), and Jean O'Shea (Futures in Education). Unaffiliated or non-religious schools received their surveys directly from CSF-NYC. Out of 500 schools, 257 returned the surveys (a return rate of 51.4%).

All data from the returned surveys was entered into Excel files and analyzed using that software package. No additional statistical software was used in the preparation of this report.

Details of the CSF-NYC Program

In 1999, CSF held a national lottery where they awarded 40,000 scholarships ranging in amount from $600-$1,700 for children attending grades kindergarten through 8 at the private school of their choice. Families were determined to be eligible based on income guidelines and household size, and scholarships were awarded on a sliding-scale basis, with families receiving 25%, 50% or 75% of their total tuition (excluding fees, uniforms, books, etc.), up to a maximum of $1,700 (for the 2001-2002 school year the maximum award will be $1,775). Families were also expected to contribute at least $500 toward their children's tuition. Every year families must re-qualify for their scholarships, ensuring that they still fall within the income guidelines and that they have re-enrolled at a private school for the upcoming school year.

During the 1999-2000 school year, CSF-NYC had 1,976 scholarship recipients. After that first year, CSF-NYC was authorized to add another cohort of scholarship recipients; for the 2000-2001 school year an additional 1,712 scholarships were awarded. However, due to attrition from the first year of the program, the total number of students

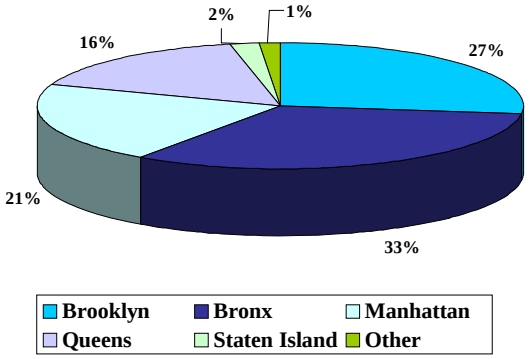
receiving scholarships as of June 2001 was 3,359. The average family income for the 2000-2001 school year was $18,078, with families receiving an average of $1,255 in scholarship money and an average tuition charge of $2,639. For the 2000-2001 school year, the maximum scholarship amount was $1,700, with 29.5% of student receiving this maximum.

For the 2001-2002 school year, families in both the first and second cohorts were allowed to add siblings to the scholarship, as long as those children were also entering kindergarten through 8th grade. At the writing of this report, the re-qualification process is still underway, so final numbers of returning and new students are not available.

Findings

Demographics of CSF-NYC Families

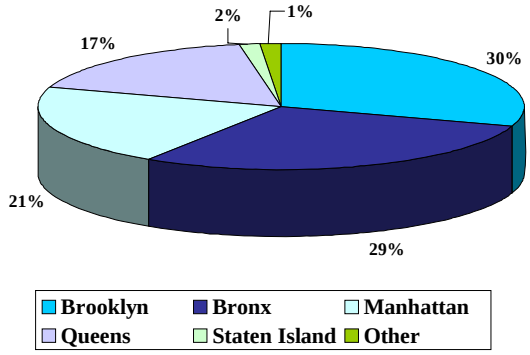
Figure 1 : Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents By Borough Who Responded to Survey



From our own database, we can determine how many families reside in each borough of New York City. But in order to determine how similar the response group is to the general CSF-NYC population, we asked parents to tell us in what borough they live [See Figure 1 for a breakdown of families by borough]. 257 families, or 33%, reside in the Bronx, another 210 or 26.7% reside in Brooklyn. Manhattan had the next largest representation, with 162 families or 20.6% living there, and 127 more or 16.2% living in Queens. Staten Island only has 17 families or 1.8% living there, while another 11 families live in Westchester or on Long Island.

ffFiThese numbers are in line with our general CSF-NYC population of students, as determined by a report generated by our Access database [see Figure 2 for a breakdown of CSF-NYC students by borough].

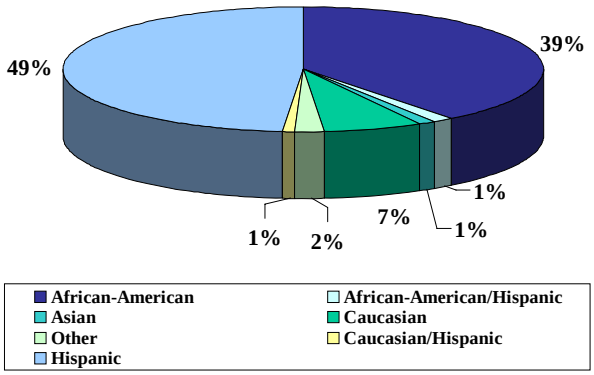
Figure 2 Breakdown of All CSF-NYC Students by Borough



From this we can conclude that those parents who returned the surveys are a good representation of our larger population.

CSF-NYC applications never ask parents what their ethnic background is because scholarships are awarded based only on income levels, not race. However, we felt that it was important to know what our families ethnic background is, so we asked parents to indicate if they were Asian, African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic or Other [See Figure 3 for a breakdown of parents by ethnicity].

Figure 3: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents by Ethnicity



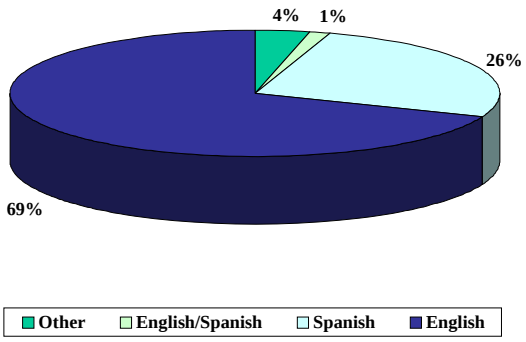
373 parents or 47.5% indicated that they were Hispanic, another 302 families or 38.4% are African-American. 51 families, or 6.5% said they were Caucasian and only 1.3% or 10 families, indicated they were of Asian descent. Another 30

parents were a mix of ethnicities; 28 parents did not respond to this question.

Of those families responding to the survey, 47.5% are Hispanic, 38.4% are African-American, 6.5% are Caucasian and 1.3% are Asian.

Along the same lines as ethnic background, we also were interested in seeing how many families considered English to be their first language [See Figure 4 for breakdown of CSF-NYC families by primary language spoken].

Figure 4 : Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents by Primary Language Spoken



Not surprisingly, the vast majority of families, 522 or 66.4% spoke English as their first language, while 209 families or 27%, spoke Spanish as their first language. Because such a large number of families speak Spanish as their first language, it is important that CSF-NYC always have at least one staff member fluent in Spanish. It is interesting to note, however, that another 14 languages were the primary language spoken at home, including: Arabic, Akan, Bengali, Chinese, Creole, Dutch, French, Greek, Polish, Russian, Twi, Yiddish and Yoruba. 5 families indicated that English was not their first language, but did not specify what was their primary language, while an additional 4 did not answer the question.

Our survey also asked parents to indicate whether or not they considered themselves to be a single parent. The overwhelming majority – 591 parents or 75% - said that they were single parents. This was especially interesting to us, since it shows that despite having only one income, parents are willing to make financial sacrifices in order to have the money to pay for their children's tuition.

Parents' Assessment of Private Schools

In order to get a general idea of how parents feel about the experience that their child has had at private school, we asked parents to grade their child's experience at private school on a scale of A-F [See Figure 5 for a breakdown of parents' overall rating of their children's experience at private school]. More than half the parents – 429 or 54.6% - graded their child's experience as an "A." An additional 296 parents or 37.7% graded it as a "B." Fewer than 60 parents or less than 8% rated it as a "C" or less, with only 3 parents not responding to this question. These responses indicate that parents feel that their children have had an excellent experience at their respective private schools.

On a similar note, we asked parents what grade they would give their own experience with the administrators at their child's school [See Figure 5 for a breakdown of parents' rating of their own experiences with private school administrators], and, again, the majority of parents rated their experience as an "A": 456 parents answered this way or 58%. Another 248 parents or 31.6% graded their experience as a "B" or better. Only 68 parents or 8.7% rated it as "C" or worse, with 10 parents not responding to this question.

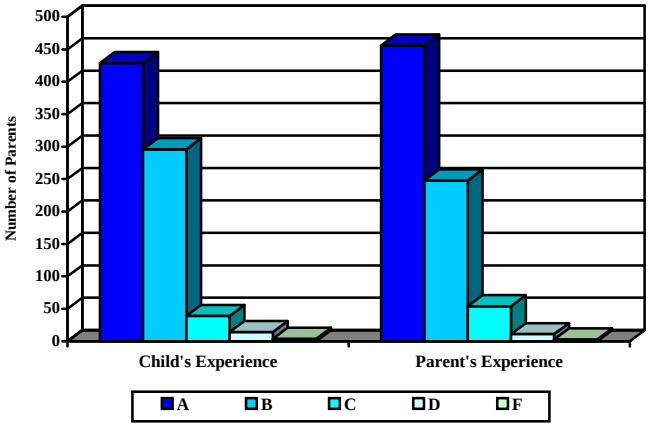
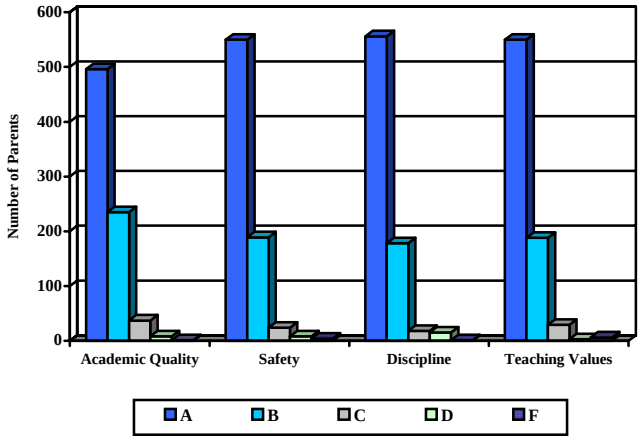


Figure 5: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents' Overall Rating of Their Children and Their Own Experiences at Private Schools

pleased with both their child's experience at their private school as well as their own experience, we asked them to grade their children's schools from

A-F on the following factors: Academic Quality, [See Figure 6 for a breakdown of parents' ratings of specific qualities of private schools].

Figure 6: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents' Rating of Qualities of Private Schools



For all four factors, almost every parent gave their school a grade of B or better, illustrating to us that because the private schools provide a high level of Academic Quality, Safety, Discipline and Teaching Values, parents are willing to send their children to these schools even if it is sometimes difficult for them financially. In fact, 377 families or 48% gave their children's school a grade of "A" or better on all four factors.

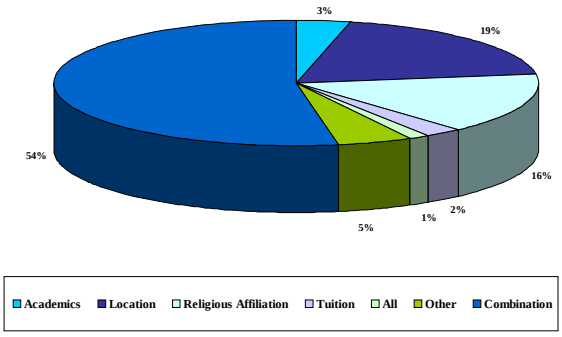
In terms of Academic Quality, 496 parents or 63.1% gave a grade of "A", while another 235 or 30% gave a grade of "B." Only 46 parents or 5.8% gave a grade of "C" or worse. Three parents did not answer this question. In terms of Safety, 550 parents or 70%, rated the safety of their child's school as an "A," with another 189 or 24% rating it as a "B." Only 36 parents rated the safety of their children's schools as a "C" or below, with 9 parents not responding to this question.

With 566 parents or 72% of the parents responding with a grade of "A," Discipline was the area that the highest number of parents seemed pleased with in relation to their child's school, especially since another 178 parents or 23% gave their school a grade of "B" when it came to discipline. Only 34 parents gave a grade of "C" or below; 7 parents did not answer this question. Parents also indicated their pleasure with the Teaching Values of their children's school, since 550 parents or 70% gave their Safety, Discipline and Teaching Values [See school an "A" on this measure, with another 188 or 24% giving it a "B." Only 41 parents or 5.2% gave their school a "C" or worse. Nine parents chose not to respond to this question.

On a similar note, parents were asked if, overall, they were proud of their child's school. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of parents answered "Yes" to this question: 710 parents or 90.3% indicated that they are proud of their child's school. Only 35 parents or 4.5% answered "No" to this question, while almost the same number, 31, chose not answer this question.

Our survey also asked parents to indicate what led them to choose the private school their child was attending. Parents were asked to choose from: location, cost of tuition, religious affiliation, or other, and they could indicate as many reasons as they chose [Figure 7 shows the breakdown of parents' reasons for choosing their child's private

Figure 7: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents' Reasons for Choosing Private School

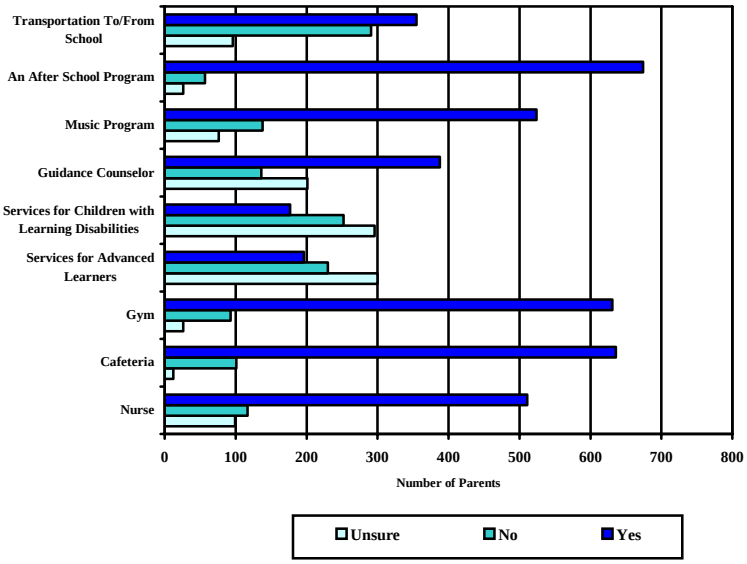


Location was the number one reason why parents chose the school, with 148 or 18.8% of the parents giving this response only. Another 122 parents or 15.5% chose religious affiliation as their sole reason. Almost as many parents – 117 or 14.9% - chose a combination of location and religious affiliation as their main reason for choosing their child's school. Only 27 parents or 3.4% chose academics as their sole reason and even fewer parents than that – 19 – chose cost of tuition as their sole reason. But for the most part, parents chose a combination of location and any number of other factors, including discipline, safety, services offered, cost of tuition, mission of

school, reputation, or because a family member also attended the school. Because location played such a big part in parents' decision making, it appears that there is a great demand for alternative school options in lower-income neighborhoods.

Although we did ask the schools to indicate what facilities and services they had at their school, we also asked parents to report back to us on their knowledge of the facilities and services their children's schools have. Parents were asked if their children's schools had: a nurse, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, services for advanced learners, services for children with learning disabilities, a guidance counselor, a music program, an after-school program and transportation to/from school. Parents could answer Yes, No or Unsure to each of these items [Figure 8 shows the breakdown of parents' responses to each of these items].

Figure 8: Breakdown of Facilities/Services Offered by Schools: As Reported by Parents

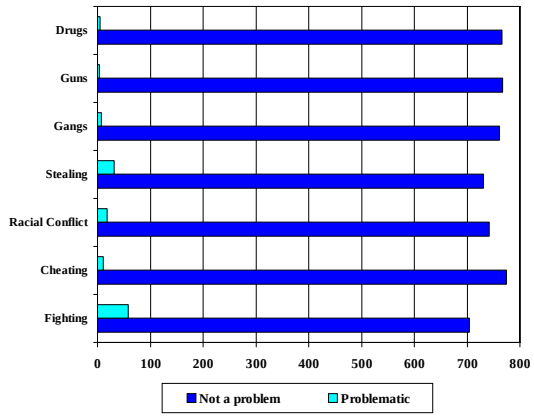


Just as the majority of schools indicated that they did, indeed, have these services, so, too did parents. However, more parents indicated that their child's school did not have services for advanced learners (230 "No" vs. 196 "Yes") or children with learning disabilities (252 "No" vs. 177 "Yes"), than those parents who indicated that their child's school did. But what is more surprising is that an even larger number answered that they were "Unsure": 300 parents (38.2%) did not know if their child's school offered services for advanced learners and 296 (37.7%) did not know if their child's school offered services for children with learning disabilities. The only other service that parents were almost as unsure about was whether or not their child's school had a guidance counselor: 201 parents answered "Unsure" to that question (25.6%), while 388 said "Yes" (49.3%) and 136 said "No" (17.3%). From the number of parents who answered "Unsure" to these three items, we can infer that many of the parents did not need any of these services, and were thus, unsure if heir child's school had them. Whereas a nurse, a cafeteria, a gym, music, transportation and an after-school program are all items which most parents would know about since their child would utilize many of those facilities and services on a regular basis.

Our survey also asked parents whether they considered any of the following to be problematic at their child's school: fighting, cheating, racial conflict, stealing, gangs, guns, or drugs [See Figure 9 for breakdown of parents' responses to which of these items they view as problematic at their private schools].

As we expected, over 700 parents (89%) answered "No" for each item. Fighting had the most positive answers, with 58 parents or 7.4% indicating that it was a problem at their child's school, while 32 parents or 4.1% indicated that stealing was a problem. Less than 20 parents indicated that cheating, racial conflict, gangs, guns or drugs were a problem at their child's school.

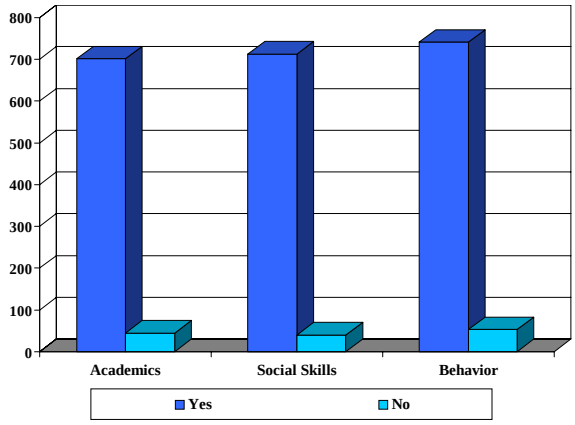
Figure 9: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Parents' Responses to What They Perceived as Problems at Their Child's Private School



Parents were also asked to indicate if their children had shown an improvement in academic achievement, social skills, behavior or any other area [Figure 10 shows CSF-NYC parents'

response to whether or not their children showed an improvement in the designated area.

Figure 10: Number of CSF-NYC Parents Indicating an Improvement in Their Children in Specified Area



There was an overwhelming positive response to this question: 710 parents or 90.3% saw an improvement in their child's academic achievement; 713 parents or 90.7% saw an improvement in their child's social skills; and 741 parents or 94.3% saw an increase in their child's behavior, however, several parents did comment that their child's behavior was never problematic.

It was also interesting to note the other areas in which their children showed an improvement. 16 parents or 2% indicated that their child had improved religious and/or spiritual values since attending a private, presumably religious, school. Another area of improvement was in children's self-esteem and self-confidence, with 8 parents listing that on their surveys. Some other areas that parents saw an improvement in were: attitude, character, communication, critical thinking, motivation, independence, interest in learning, leadership, penmanship, reading, math, responsibility, school pride, values and writing. Because parents were not prompted for any of these reasons, these so-called "write-ins" are even more illustrative of why parents continue to send their children to private school: they have seen more subtle improvements in their children than just academics or behavior, and they have attributed those improvements to their child's private school.

Finally, in light of all the other factors that affected a parent's decision to send their child to private school, we asked parents to indicate if their child would be returning next year. Again, it was of little surprise that 673 parents or 85.6% of the parents said their child would be returning next year. Only 34 parents or 4.3% said that their child would not be returning, but of those 34, 14 had graduated from the highest grade offered, 7 were switching to a school closer to home, 4 were attending schools that were closing in June 2001, and another 4 families had moved. Only 8 parents indicated that their child was leaving because of something negative: 1 chose a better school, 2 did not feel the school had met their expectations, 3 were unhappy, 1 child could not meet the school's requirements and 1 had poor academic performance.

From all of these findings, it is clear that parents of CSF-NYC students have had an extremely positive experience with their child's school and that their children are benefiting from the opportunity to attend the private school of their parents' choice.

Parents' Assessment of CSF-NYC

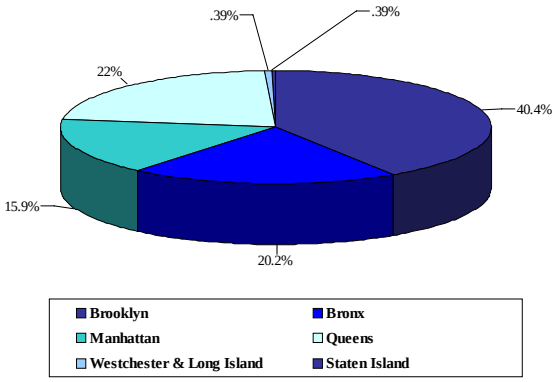
Of course, it was also important to ascertain how CSF-NYC was serving its clients, so parents were asked to grade their experience with CSF-NYC on a scale of A-F. 677 parents or 86.1% gave their experience with the staff of CSF-NYC an "A" (25 of those were an A+), another 59 parents or 7.5% rated it as a "B." Only 4 parents rated it as a "C," and 1 rated it as a "D." 19 parents did not respond to this question.

At the bottom of the survey, parents had space to write additional comments, as well as indicate whether or not we could contact them about their answers. In all cases where parents had something negative to express, someone from CSF-NYC contacted that family in an effort to address the problem. By and large, however, parents wrote positive comments, with many of them thanking CSF-NYC for providing them with the opportunity to send their children to private school, while still others praised the school their child attended. Some parents also requested that their scholarships be extended to family members or friends, or through high school, as they were anxious about paying for private school on their own. Appendix B contains some of the comments that parents wrote on their surveys.

Demographics of CSF Schools

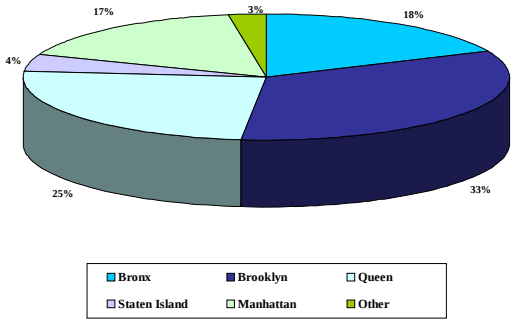
Each school was asked to designate in what borough of New York City they were located so that we could have a general idea of whether the majority of the schools were located in one borough or whether they were fairly evenly distributed throughout the City [See Figure 11 for a breakdown of CSF-NYC schools by borough].

Figure 11: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Schools by Borough



Brooklyn had the most schools respond to our survey: 40.4% of schools said they were located in Brooklyn, followed by Queens with 21.8%, the Bronx with 20.2%, and Staten Island and Westchester with less than 1% each. From our CSF-NYC Access database, we are able to determine that the general CSF-NYC school distribution is quite similar to the distribution of those schools that responded to our survey [See Figure 12 for a breakdown of all CSF-NYC schools by borough].

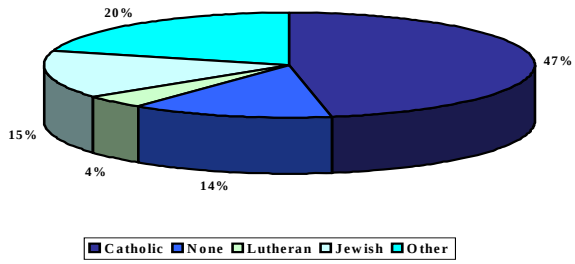
Figure 12: Breakdown of All CSF-NYC Schools by Borough



It was noted earlier that this same database report indicated how many students attended school in each borough. It is interesting to see that this data indicates that approximately the same number of students attend school in the Bronx (977 students) as in Brooklyn (997), despite the fact that there are fewer private schools in the Bronx. From this data, as well as recent reports that some School Districts in the Bronx are failing,[3] it can be inferred that there is a greater demand for private schools in the Bronx, and that the borough could benefit from the opening of additional private schools or other alternative school choices.

To determine what percentage of schools had a religious affiliation, we asked the school administrator to identify what the school's affiliation was, if any [Figure 13 shows the breakdown of CSF-NYC schools by religious affiliation].

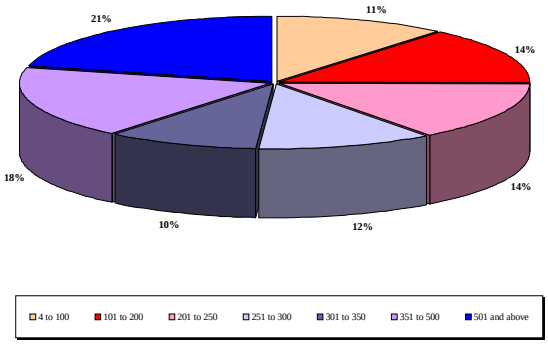
Figure 13: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Schools by Religious Affiliation



As expected, the vast majority of schools (79.4%) did have a religious affiliation: only 33 schools or 12.9% did not have a religious affiliation and 20 schools or 7.8% of schools did not respond to that question. Among the religious schools, the largest religious denomination represented was Roman Catholic: 114 schools or 44.4%. The next largest single denomination represented was Judaism: 36 schools or 14%. Other denominations listed included (number of schools listed in parentheses): AME (1), Baptist (3), Blauvelt Dominican (1), Eastern Orthodox (1), Episcopalian (3), Evangelical Christian/Protestant (1), Greek Orthodox (2), Islamic (4), Lutheran (10), Methodist (1), Moravian (1), Pentecostal (2), Presbyterian Sisters (1), Presbyterian (1), Seventh Day Adventist (3), and "Spirit Filled" (1).

Just as the schools varied by religious affiliation, so, too, do their enrollment numbers [Figure 14 shows a breakdown of CSF-NYC schools by total student enrollment].

Figure 14: Breakdown of All CSF-NYC Schools by Borough

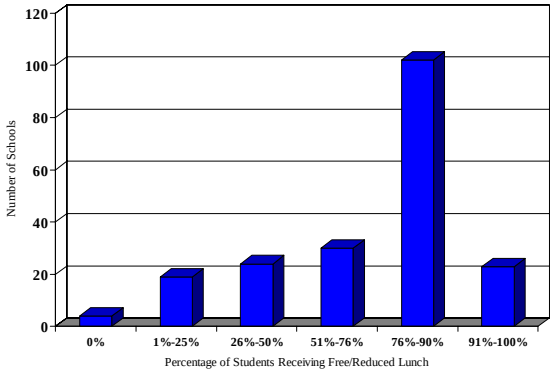


The smallest school only had 4 students enrolled, while the largest school enrolled 8,000 students; 7 schools did not respond to this question. And, in fact, the largest percentage of schools responding to the survey had enrollments of 551 students or more: 43 schools or 16.7% fell into this category. When defining big schools as having 251 students or mor, it becomes even more apparent that most schools that CSF-NYC students attend are big schools: 151 schools or 58.8% have more than 250 students enrolled in them.

In terms of CSF-NYC students enrolled in these schools, in general the larger schools had more CSF students enrolled in them, but from our relatively simple data analysis, there does not appear to be any direct relationship between the size of the school and the number of students enrolled. Schools enroll anywhere between 1 and 47 CSF-NYC students, but the majority enroll only 1-5 students: 145 schools or 56.4% fall into this category. Another 63 schools or 24.5% enroll 6-10 students. From these numbers, it appears that CSF-NYC students are fairly evenly distributed across the different schools.

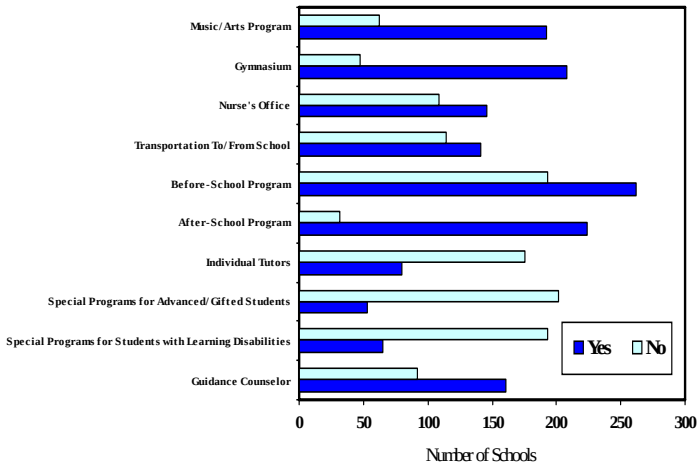
In order to determine how many low-income families enroll their children in our private schools (above and beyond the CSF students), we asked the schools to indicate what percentage of their students receive free or reduced lunch or what discount percentage their school receives from the E-Rate Program [Chart 15 shows the number of schools that have a specified percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch].

Figure 15: Number of CSF-NYC Schools With Specified Percentage of Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch



Over half of the schools, 155 or 60%, indicated that over 50% of their students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, with 103 of those schools indicating that between 76%-90% of their students were eligible. Only 41 schools or 16% indicated that none of their students were eligible; 15 schools chose not to answer this question. Because of their smaller size and lower operating expenses, many private schools do not have all of the following facilities and services: a guidance counselor, services for students with learning disabilities, services for advanced learners, tutors, an after-school program, a before-school program, transportation to/from school, a school nurse, a gymnasium and an art and/or music program. Our survey asked school administrators to report which of the abovementioned facilities and services their school has [Chart 16 shows a breakdown of facilities and services the schools reported as having].

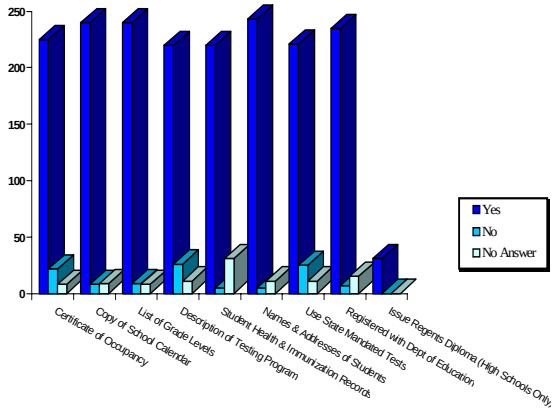
Figure 16: Breakdown of Facilities/Services Offered by Schools: As Reported by Schools



Only one school reported having all 10 items listed above, no schools reported having none of these items, and all schools answered this question. Slightly less than half of the schools, 112 schools or 43.6%, reported having 6 or more of these facilities or services. More schools responded that they did have these facilities or services than responded that they did not, except in the areas of services for children with learning disabilities (193 did not versus 65 who did), services for advanced learners (202 did not versus 53) and tutors (176 did not versus 80). 224 schools or 87.1% reported having an after-school program, while 208 schools or 80.1% reported having a gymnasium. And in light of reports that music and art programs are consistently being dropped due to a lack of funding, it was heartening to see that almost 75% (192) of the schools reporting having one or both programs.

The New York State Department of Education requires that all new non-public schools maintain the following items[4]: a Certificate of Occupancy, a school calendar for the upcoming year, a list of grade levels and the enrollment numbers of each grade, a description of the testing program used to evaluate students' performance, students' health and attendance records, and records of the names and addresses of all children attending the school. Our survey asked schools to indicate which of these items they kept on record at the school [Chart 17 shows how many schools maintain each of these itemsl.

Figure 17: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Schools that Maintain State Mandated Requirements



176 schools responded that they maintained all of these records on file – this is 68.5% of all schools responding. An additional 20 schools maintained all but one of these items: 11 schools maintained all but the Certificate of Occupancy, 7 did not maintain a description of their testing program, 1 school did not maintain a school calendar and another did not maintain health or immunization records. For all items, there were far more schools who maintained these records than did not.

New York City public schools must also administer standardized tests, designed by the Department of Education. Private schools do not have to use these tests, but many do. Our survey asked schools to indicate if State mandated tests were part of their program to evaluate students; 221 schools or 86% do use State mandated tests, 25 schools did not and 11 schools chose not to answer this question. Private schools also have the choice to register with the State Department of Education. 235 schools, or 91.4%, indicated that they are registered with the State; 7 are not and 15 did not answer this survey question.

Taken together, these last three survey questions (type of records maintained, administering of State mandated tests, and registration with the State), indicate that almost all of the private schools our students attend are meeting the State mandated requirements and that they are doing them on a voluntary basis. This should serve to reassure parents that these private schools are well run and that they meet State standards.

Schools' Assessment of CSF-NYC Families

We also asked schools to let us know how the CSF-NYC students were faring at their schools in comparison to their other students [Chart 18 shows the breakdown of CSF-NYC schools' biggest reported obstacle regarding CSF-NYC students].

Figure 18: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Schools' Biggest Reported Obstacle Regarding CSF-NYC Students

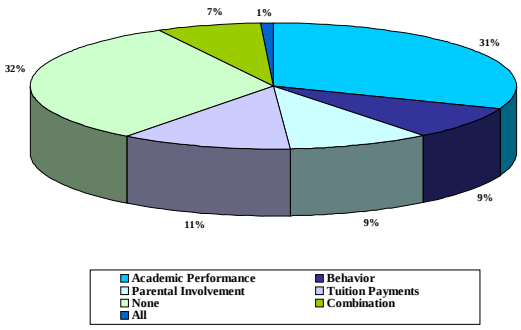
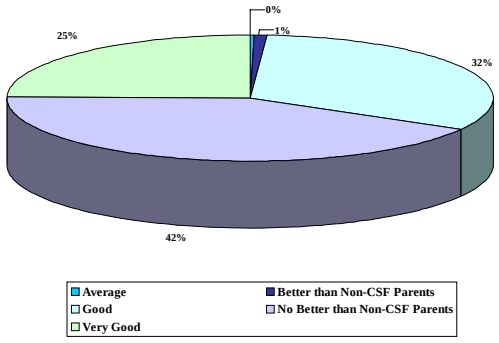


Figure 19: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Schools' Evaluation of CSF- NYC Program



The assumption was that coming from public school, many of the children would be behind their private school counterparts, especially in light of recent reports indicating that 3 out of 4 City schools fail to meet the New York State standards[5]. And, in fact, 75 schools or 29.1% of the schools reported that "Academic Performance" was the biggest obstacle they faced in relation to the CSF-NYC children. Another 28 schools or 10.9% reported that "Tuition Payments" were their biggest problem; 23 schools or 8.9% reported that "Parental Involvement" was their biggest obstacle; and 21 schools or 8.2% stated that "Behavior" presented the biggest problem; only 2 schools reported that "All" items listed were problematic. On a positive note, however, 83 schools or 33.5% indicated no problems with the CSF-NYC students and parents.

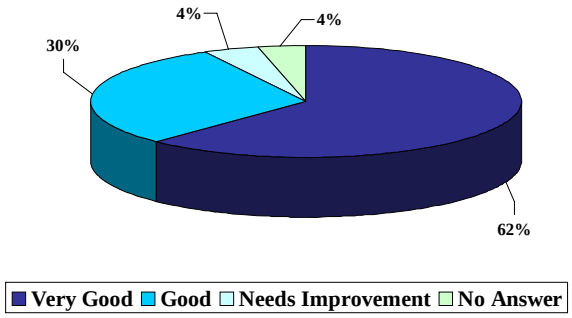
30.3% of schools rated CSF-NYC parental involvement as Good, with another 23.3% rating it as Very Good

In order to determine whether or not our families were getting involved at their child's school, we asked the schools to evaluate CSF-NYC parental involvement in comparison to the other parents at their school [Chart 19 shows the breakdown of 101 schools, or 39.2% stated that parental involvement was "No Better" than non-CSF-NYC parents; 78 schools or 30.3% reported parental involvement as "Good," with another 60 schools, or 23.3% reporting it as "Very Good." Twelve schools did not answer this survey question; only 1 school said that participation was "Average." Thus, it appears that CSF-NYC families are participating in their child's school, or at least they are just as involved as the other non-CSF-NYC families.

Schools' Assessment of CSF-NYC Program

Finally, we asked schools to provide feedback on their experience with the CSF-NYC staff and administration of the program [Figure 20 shows the breakdown of CSF-NYC schools' evaluation of CSF-NYC staff]. The majority of schools, 159 schools or 61.8% indicated that their experience had been "Very Good" with another 77 rating it as "Good" and 1 rating it as "Excellent." Only 11 schools indicated that the program "Needs Improvement" and 9 did not answer. Of those schools that were unhappy with CSF-NYC, the majority of them indicated that they found the Scholarship Verification Report (SVR) to be a burdensome procedure and would like CSF-NYC to revise this system.

Figure 20: Breakdown of CSF-NYC Schools' Evaluation of CSF -NYC Program

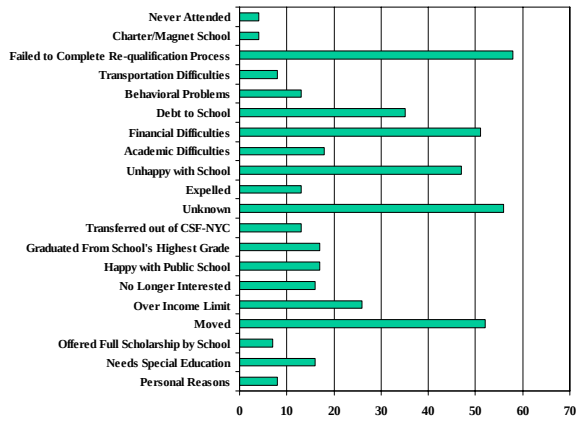


Three times a year, an SVR is sent to the school principal who must then have each parent come in to sign the SVR and then return the form to the CSF-NYC office. The SVRs allow CSF-NYC to ensure that students are still enrolled at their school before funds are released to that school, and it creates an opportunity for parents and school administrators to have a face-to-face interaction several times a year. Once the completed SVRs are returned, funds are disbursed in three payments: 40% in November, 40% in February and 20% in June. Schools, however, indicated that it was often difficult to get parents to come to the school to sign the SVRs and that it was undue work on the part of the schools' staff. But on a more positive note, most of the comments submitted by schools indicated their gratefulness toward the Fund for providing these scholarships and wondered how additional families could benefit from the program.

Attrition

Although only in existence for two years, CSF-NYC has experienced attrition among its families. To gain a better understanding of this attrition, CSF-NYC asks parents to state a reason for their decision to decline the scholarship [See Figure 21 for a breakdown of attrition reasons]. It is our hope that by having a better understanding of attrition, we can work with our families to help them stay with the program. Since our inception, 479 students have become "Inactive" – these students make up our attrition numbers. Among these 479, 26 students or 5.4% were deemed to be over the income limit and were excluded from the program for the upcoming school year. Another 51 students or 10.6% claimed financial difficulties as their primary reason for declining the scholarship, while 35 students or 7.3% owed a debt to their old private school. 6 students or 3.3% stated that their child needs special education. 52 students or 10.9% moved out of the CSF-NYC area and an additional 13 or 2.7% transferred to another CSF office. On a more positive note, 7 students or 1.5% were offered a full scholarship by their school, thus removing the need for additional assistance from CSF-NYC. Some students were made "Inactive" after they were expelled from school or because their parents failed to complete the re-qualification process. The remaining students declined due to: lack of transportation to school; personal or unknown reasons; because they had academic difficulties, were expelled or had behavioral problems; they were happy with the public school or unhappy with the private school; the parent decided to enroll their child in a charter or magnet school or never enrolled the child in private school; the child graduated from the highest grade offered at the school; or were simply no longer interested in the scholarship.

Figure 21: Reasons for Attrition Among CSF-NYC Families: As Reported by Families



Bracket Changes

At the end of every school year, parents must complete a re-qualification packet in order to retain their child's scholarship for the following year. At the conclusion of this process, CSF-NYC analyzes the number of families that have changed income brackets since the previous school year. "Income bracket" refers to the percentage of tuition that is covered by the scholarship - 25%, 50% or 75% - up to the maximum amount of $1,700. When families move from a higher income bracket (i.e., 75%) to a lower income

bracket (i.e., 50%), it is due to an increase in their household income: a positive change for the family's fiscal health. Conversely, when a family moves from a lower income bracket to a higher income bracket, it indicates a decrease in their household income for the year. For the school year 2001-2002, 16.1% of CSF-NYC families went down one or two income brackets, while only 6.3% of families went up one or two income brackets. And although 59.7% of families stayed in the same income bracket, their average income rose from $24,300 to $26,262: better than the rate of inflation[6]. Taken together, these numbers show a somewhat positive financial outlook for many CSF-NYC families, especially since only 36% of families are in the 75% income bracket. Of course, it must be remembered that as families' income brackets decrease, their scholarships decrease as well, perhaps resulting in a larger percentage of their take-home pay going toward school tuition.

Limitations of Report

One limitation of this report is that some findings could be skewed by self-reporting. In other words, the generally positive results of this study could be a result of only happy parents responding to the survey. In addition, because surveys did ask parents to include their name and address, some parents who were unhappy with CSF-NYC may have been hesitant to respond to the survey fearing that negative answers would jeopardize their children's scholarships. However, since the results seem to be in line with those of Peterson's 2001 study, I believe that our findings are relatively accurate.

In terms of the statistics reported herein, as previously stated, feedback was manually entered into an Excel file, which was then sorted and calculated. This method, while generally accurate, is not statistically preferable, nor is it easily manipulated, thus making it difficult to calculate the inter-relatedness of many of the factors. For this reason, this study is not as complex or statistically significant as we would like.

Finally, were this study to be conducted again in the future, one question that should be asked of parents is what they find to be the most difficult aspect of sending their children to private school. While we have assumed that many parents find the financial aspect to be difficult because of their socio-economic status, it would be interesting to see what other aspects of private school they struggle with, for both themselves and their children.

Conclusion

As previously stated, the purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding the CSF-NYC families, their reasons for choosing a private school, and what they and their children have experienced at those schools. We are happy to report that overall, CSF-NYC parents have had a positive experience with CSF-NYC and the schools that their children attend. With very few parents transferring schools or leaving the program, we can conclude that the scholarships are indeed a good thing to many of these parents. We can also conclude that many more parents and children could benefit from such scholarships, if only the funds were available to support them. It is clear that the CSF-NYC parents, many of whom are single-parents, are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to send their children to private schools, and that few parents must decline the scholarship because of financial difficulties.

In addition, it appears that the private schools have also had a relatively positive response to CSF-NYC. Although academic achievement was cited most frequently as the biggest challenge schools faced in relation to their CSF-NYC students, this was to be expected. And in fact, quite a large number of schools reported no problems with their students or their parents.

Like Peterson's national study, it appears that CSF-NYC has had a positive effect on its scholarship recipients. The improvements that parents have seen in their children on academic, social and personal levels are enough of a reason to continue funding the program. Parents have shown their ability to exercise choice and to make the right decision for their children's education. More parents should be provided with the opportunity to send their children to private school, as it will surely have as positive an effect on those families, as it has had on these.

Appendix A: Excerpts of Parents' Comments from Surveys

"As a parent, I must say thank you very much. What this fund has done for my children is beyond words. My children were very lucky to have such a wonderful opportunity like this one. They were given the opportunity of learning which is a blessing. I pray everyday that the fund will continue doing miracles for others as they did with my family. Thank you again."

– Belgica Rosa, Queens

"Children's Scholarship Fund is an awesome program. Thanks to this program many low-income families are able to send their or our children to the school of our choice that can best fit our children's academic needs."

– Esperanza Urena, Manhattan

"I have three children in school thanks to CSF. My daughter was struggling in public school but this year she is a different person in her academics. She is doing wonderful compared to last year. My son also had difficulties in school and is now doing fine. Thank You CSF."

– Jacqueline Velasquez, Brooklyn

"I thank the scholarship fund for help me with my children's academics! I am a single mother that wants the best academics for her children. Thanks so much!"

– Ada Mora, Manhattan

"I think that CSF is Gods Gift to parents that are unable to send their kids to private school. My children are certainly more positive, my daughter wants to be a judge, my son says he wants to be a doctor, I believe them. I just want to say to thank you to all who made this possible, I am a parent with Lupus and I am unable to give them certain things, but to them this is one of the most special gifts. Thanks."

– Yvonne Mitchell, Queens

"I would like to thank everyone at the Children Scholarship Fund for giving my child the best gift you can give any child and that is a brighter future. Thanks so much."

– Adrian Mayo, Bronx

"The first year my son was in school I struggled to pay the tuition but I really wanted him to stay in the school, but I had no way of keeping him there for a second year. In May when I received the letter for CSF saying he was accepted, I was in tears. I'm so grateful for it. I know that I would never be able to keep him in the school. Thank you so much for the help."

– Angela Fratto, Bronx

"We would like to thank you for the opportunity you're giving to our children, the future supporters of the Children's Scholarship Fund. You really make a difference in children's life."

– Elias Groisman, Brooklyn

Appendix B

Children's Scholarship Fund

New York City

Return **BY JUNE 15, 2001** to:
Children's Scholarship Fund-New York
7 West 57th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, New York 10019-3404
Phone: (212) 515-7137
Fax: (212) 750-2840

School Feedback Form

Please complete this form to help us learn more about your experience with the Children's Scholarship Fund and our families.

1. Name of School: _____

2. Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

3. Phone Number: ( ) _____ Fax Number: ( ) _____

4. Name of Principal/School Administrator:_____

5. Does your school have a religious affiliation? Yes No
   If "Yes," please specify:_____

6. What is your school's *total* enrollment? _____

7. How many children in your school are part of the Children's Scholarship Fund?_____

8. How many students in your school are eligible for free/reduced lunch (or what discount percentage does your school receive from the E-rate Program)?_____

9. Does your school work with any other scholarship programs? Yes No
   If so, which one(s)?_____

9. What percentage of funds for your school's budget comes from CSF? _____

10. What percentage of funds for your school's budget comes from tuition? _____

11. What percentage of funds for your school's budget comes from an affiliate organization? (For example, the Diocese.) _____

12. Which of the following facilities/programs are available at your school? (Please check ALL that apply.)

- ❑ Guidance Counselor
- ❑ Special Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities

- ❑ Special Programs for Advanced/Gifted Students
- ❑ Individual Tutors
- ❑ After-School Program
- ❑ Before-School Program
- ❑ Transportation To/From School
- ❑ Nurse's Office
- ❑ Gymnasium (Physical Education Program)
- ❑ Music (Arts) Program

(OVER)

13. What has been the biggest challenge your school has faced with respect to CSF students who transferred from public school to your school? (Please check only **ONE.)**

- ❑ Academic Performance
- ❑ Behavioral Problems
- ❑ Discipline Problems
- ❑ Parental Involvement
- ❑ Tuition Payment

14. Please indicate which of the following best describes the parental involvement of CSF parents attending your school. (Please check only **ONE.)**

- ❑ Very Good
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Better Than Non-CSF Parents
- ❑ No Better than Non-CSF Parents

15. What has been your experience with the administration of the Scholarship Program?

- ❑ Very Good
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Needs Improvement (Please explain)

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Please indicate which of the following your school maintains: (Please check ALL that apply.)

- ❑ A certificate of occupancy issued by the Department of Buildings
- ❑ A copy of the school calendar for the coming year
- ❑ A list of grade levels and the total enrollment at each grade level
- ❑ A description of the testing program used to evaluate students' performance
- ❑ Students' attendance and health records (certificates of immunizations)
- ❑ Records of the names and addresses of students attending school

17. Are State mandated tests a part of your school's total program to evaluate students?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

18. Is your school registered with the New York State Education Department?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

19. If your school is a high school that issues diplomas, is it registered with the Board of Regents?

❑ Yes ❑ No

20. Please feel free to add any additional comments you would like to share with us. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We thank you for your cooperation with filling out this survey.

[1] William G. Howell, Patrick J. Wolf, Paul E. Peterson, and David E. Campbell, "Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D.C.: Evidence from Randomized Field Trials," Paper prepared for the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 2000.

[2] Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell, "An Evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund," Paper prepared under the auspices of the Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, May 2001.

[3] Only 22.5% of 4th and 8th graders in District 9 tested at or above grade level on state mandated reading tests, compared to the citywide rate of 41.7%, as reported by Carolina Gonzalez in "Protest at Ed Conference: Parents say Bronx Dist. 9 is in a crisis," *New York Daily News*, Monday, March 12, 2001.

[4] The State Education Department, Office for Nonpublic School Services Memo to Persons Interested in Starting a New School, June 1, 1998.
[5] Alison Gendar and Paul H.B. Shin, "3 Out of 4 City Schools Flunk: Don't measure up to new state standards," *New York Daily News*, Thursday, March 15, 2001.
[6] These percentages do not total 100% because at the time this report was written, 17.9% of families had not returned information pertaining to their household income for 2000.