

The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement and College Entrance

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How did the LSP affect student outcomes?

A new study estimates the average impact of the Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) on student achievement in math, English Language Arts (ELA), and science after four years of the program. After large initial declines in achievement in the first year of the program, students in grades 1-5 who used LSP scholarships won through lotteries regained some of their lost ground. However, they continued to perform below similar students who did not receive a scholarship by a lottery.

Regarding educational attainment, students in grades 7-12 who used LSP scholarships won through lotteries entered college at similar rates to students who did not win scholarship lotteries.

What is the LSP?

The LSP offers publicly funded vouchers to k-12 students from moderate- or low-income families to attend a private school of their choice. To qualify to receive the voucher, students also had to be previously enrolled in low performing public schools, based on the statewide school grading system. Private schools that participate in the

program must comply with state government regulations on admissions, financial practices, student mobility, student academic testing, and health and safety standards.

How we did the study.

We estimated the effect of LSP scholarship usage using a lottery-based design, the “gold standard” in research evaluation. The LSP used lotteries to allocate scholarships when more students applied to schools than there were seats available. We leveraged the results of these lotteries to determine how scholarship usage impacted student achievement and the likelihood of enrolling in college.

When estimating the impact of using an LSP scholarship on student achievement our sample included just over 1,600 students in grades 1-5 in the first year of the program. Our sample focusing on college enrollment included just over 1,100 students in grades 7-12 in the first year of the program who were old enough to have graduated from high school and enrolled in college four years later. We used test score data from the Louisiana Department of Education and college enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse

LSP effects for treatment and control students' achievement and college enrollment

	LSP scholarship users avg.	Control group compliers avg.	Estimated effect	p-value	N
Achievement outcomes after four years					
English Language Arts	-0.15	0.06	-0.22***	0.009	1632
Mathematics	-0.30	0.09	-0.39***	0.000	1625
Science	-0.11	0.10	-0.21**	0.034	1606
College entrance effects					
Enroll in any college	34.9%	31.7%	3.2pp	0.345	1113
2yr. institution	21.1%	17.8%	3.3pp	0.354	1112
4yr. institution	13.7%	13.9%	-0.2pp	0.944	1112

How to read the table: LSP users are students who won a lottery and enrolled in a private school. Control group compliers are those who lost a lottery but would have enrolled in a private school had they won a lottery (they are not directly observed). Test scores are in standard deviation terms. College enrollment is the percent that enrolled in college within 6 months of graduating high school.

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