

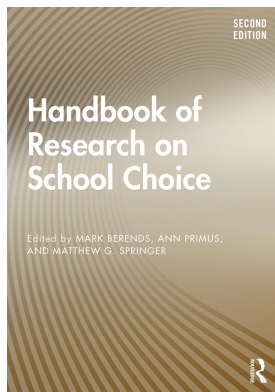
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THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF VOUCHERS

R. Joseph Waddington

School voucher programs continue to expand across the United States (Berends, 2018). In the decade that has passed since the previous version of the *Handbook of Research on School Choice* (Berends, Springer, Ballou, & Walberg, 2009), the total number of voucher programs has grown from 11 to 23 (EdChoice, 2018). As the number of programs has expanded, so too has the number of students participating. During the 2007–2008 school year, nearly 65,000 students took part in a voucher program. By the end of the 2017–2018 school year, that number more than doubled to approximately 170,000 students across the 23 programs (EdChoice, 2018).

Fueling the expansion of voucher programs has been the implementation of statewide programs with broader income eligibility criteria. Except for those targeted toward students with special learning needs or disabilities, early voucher programs existed primarily within localized contexts, such as in the cities of Cleveland, Milwaukee, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Since 2010, six new statewide programs have been implemented: Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin (EdChoice, 2018). These programs feature more expansive means-tested eligibility criteria, where in one state—Indiana—students can qualify to receive at least a partial voucher for the first time if their family’s income is up to 150 percent of the cutoff for free and reduced-price lunch eligibility (\$68,265 for a family of four in 2017–2018) (Indiana Department of Education, 2018). Students participating in statewide voucher programs in these six states account for almost half of all voucher students nationwide (EdChoice, 2018). It is worth noting, however, that far less than 1 percent of all K–12 students across the U.S. receive a voucher and attend a private school.

Although the number of students participating in voucher programs remains small in the larger K–12 schools context, the expansion of programs into new states, and active legislative efforts to implement vouchers or voucher-like programs (e.g., tax-credit scholarships) in others, provides an opportunity to reexamine the social implications of these programs (Berends, 2018). In the previous version of the *Handbook*, Thomas J. Nechyba (2009) constructed a series of theoretical arguments about the fears surrounding the expansion of private school choice, along with some practical implications for the design and implementation of voucher programs. Largely, more recent voucher programs have been designed and implemented in ways that allay many of Nechyba’s concerns and align with his suggested practical implications. At the same time, the empirical literature on the social implications of voucher programs remains thin.

This chapter is organized in three sections that revisit the social context of vouchers in the last decade. In the first section, I review Nechyba's (2009) arguments in the context of new statewide voucher programs. I look closely at the eligibility criteria for students and schools to be able to participate in various statewide voucher programs and measure their alignment with the theoretical rationale Nechyba provided. In the second section, I examine the validity of Nechyba's concerns by using information about student and school participation in these programs in conjunction with a number of empirical studies that address his concerns. In the final section, I describe a series of unanswered questions surrounding the social context of school vouchers and provide suggestions for much needed research.

Social Implications for Statewide Voucher Program Design

Nechyba (2009) argued for a series of reasonable criteria for voucher policies designed to ameliorate concerns over negative social impacts of voucher program, such as "cream-skimming" students from public schools and increased stratification between schools within a local educational market. Cream-skimming in the context of school vouchers can be defined as private schools selectively enrolling the best students (e.g., high-achieving, high-motivation) from public schools, leaving behind lower-achieving or less motivated students with fewer resources (Berliner & Glass, 2014).¹ Meanwhile, increased stratification can be defined as an uptick in the number of schools within a local educational market composed of students of the same race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Specifically, Nechyba argued that voucher programs should be designed on the basis of fostering innovation in schools, residential desegregation, and increased resource efficiency. He suggested that these goals can be achieved by careful consideration of 1) who is eligible for a voucher, 2) voucher amounts, and 3) which schools may accept voucher students.

In the following sections, I assess the aforementioned six statewide voucher programs in Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin relative to these goals. The features of these programs are displayed in Table 15.1. All student eligibility criteria, voucher amounts, and school participation information displayed and described in the paragraphs below is taken from *The ABCs of School Choice, 2018 Edition* (EdChoice, 2018). This is a comprehensive compilation of voucher program facts and figures sourced from state departments of education, legal proceedings, and other publicly available documentation.

Assessing Statewide Voucher Programs by Student Eligibility

Statewide voucher programs differ in terms of which students are eligible to receive a voucher. As mentioned, specific voucher programs in several states are targeted toward students with special learning needs or disabilities. I do not discuss these in the context of broader statewide programs. Rather, I look at the other criteria by which students qualify, namely, aspects of prior school enrollment, location, and family income.

Across the six statewide programs, Indiana provides the greatest number of pathways through which a student can qualify for a voucher. Maryland's program is the most restrictive, as only students who were previously enrolled in a public school can apply. All but the two programs in Ohio are open to students who were previously enrolled in a public school in the state, and they are only eligible if enrolling in school for the first time or they live in a low-performing public school district. The Indiana and Louisiana programs also have eligibility criteria for students who live in a

Table 15.1 Eligibility Criteria and Participation in Statewide Voucher Programs

State	IN	LA	MD	NC	OH ^c	WI ^f
Students	34,299	6,695	2,659	1,323	29,427	4,540
Attend Public	X	X ^a	X	X		X
Low-Performing Public District	X	X			X	
Special Needs	X			X ^b	X ^b	X ^b
Sibling	X					
Kindergarten	X	X		X	X	
First-Time Income Threshold (Family of Four)	150% FRL (\$68,265)	250% POV (\$61,500)	100% FRL (\$45,510)	133% FRL (\$60,528)	200% POV (\$49,200)	220% POV (\$54,420)
Avg. Voucher Amount	\$4,146	\$5,869	\$2,294	\$4,046	\$4,545 ^d	\$7,512
Additional for Special Needs	X	X			X ^b	X ^b
Private Schools	313	120	241	457	482	154
State Test Participation	X	X	X		X ^e	X ^e
Lottery-Assigned		X				
Open Admissions		X				
Nondiscrimination	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accreditation	X			X	X	X
Can be Sanctioned	X	X				

Source: EdChoice (2018), reflecting information as of the 2017–2018 school year.

Notes:

- In Louisiana, only students located within the Recovery School District in New Orleans can openly participate. Students across the rest of the state must live in a low-performing school district, have special learning needs, or have a disability.
- In North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin, there are separate programs specifically for students with an Individualized Education Plan. In Ohio and Wisconsin's programs, an increased voucher dollar amount is available for students with special needs.
- In Ohio, there are two separate statewide programs: the Educational Choice Scholarship Program targeted toward students living in low-performing public districts and the Income-Based Scholarship Program. The student eligibility criteria differ for each; however, the income thresholds and school participation criteria are the same. I include the combined requirements in this table.
- This is the weighted average voucher amount across the two programs, based on the number of students participating.
- In Ohio, only private school students receiving a voucher must take the state test, unless more than 65 percent of students in a given school are receiving a voucher. In Wisconsin, only voucher students must take the state test.
- In Wisconsin, students living within the cities of Milwaukee and Racine can only participate in their city's voucher program. These city programs have similar student and school eligibility criteria and enrolled a combined additional 31,709 students.

low-performing public school district. Four of the six programs allow students entering kindergarten or a school in the state for the first time to qualify. Indiana also allows students whose siblings qualify for a voucher to participate.

While vouchers were initially conceived as a mechanism for students to move to private schools, these expanded eligibility criteria have increased the number of students who have spent no time at all in public schools. This is particularly the case in Indiana, where less than half of all voucher students have been enrolled in a public school at any point (Indiana Department of Education, 2018). As such, the social context of vouchers has shifted over time. Increasingly, programs have become less about providing new schooling opportunities for students who have had poor experiences in public schools and more about opening access to private schools at the starting gate.

Along with the expanded voucher eligibility criteria based on prior school enrollment and location, family income thresholds have expanded. Originally, vouchers were targeted toward the lowest-income students. Although still means-tested, statewide programs have progressively extended eligibility to families in the middle class. All states use some multiple of the poverty-line or free and reduced-price lunch thresholds to determine family eligibility. As such, the maximum income threshold for families to qualify to receive at least a partial voucher ranges from \$45,510 for a family of four in Maryland to \$68,265 in Indiana. As a whole, private schools enroll students from middle to higher socioeconomic backgrounds. With expanded income thresholds, the lines between voucher students enrolling in private schools and their nonvoucher private school peers may become more blurred. At the same time, vouchers may no longer serve as a mechanism solely for students from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds to access private schools.

Assessing Statewide Voucher Programs by Voucher Amount

The average voucher amount across the six statewide programs is highly variable. At the lowest end, voucher students in Maryland received just shy of \$2,300 to pay for tuition at a participating private school as of 2017–2018. Meanwhile, students in Wisconsin received an average of over \$7,500.² The funding mechanisms also vary across states, though each one uses some formula roughly equivalent to the student's per-pupil share of funding in the public school district in which they reside. Where the average voucher amounts are higher, public schools may be subject to losing a greater share of per-pupil funds to private schools. The average cost of private schooling also varies across states and grade levels (e.g., K–8 versus 9–12). In instances where the average voucher amount is smaller, low- to middle-income families are likely to be more limited in their options. This may in turn limit the relative match between student and family schooling preferences and ultimately influence student performance.

Assessing Statewide Voucher Programs by School Participation

Across the six states, a minimum of 120 schools (Louisiana) and a maximum of 482 (Ohio) have participated in each statewide voucher program. Every school is subject to some form of state assessment; the standardized assessment is required in all states but North Carolina.³ In Ohio and Wisconsin, only private school students participating in the voucher program are required to be tested, whereas in Indiana, Louisiana, and Maryland, all private school students are tested. Private schools in Indiana and Louisiana are subject to sanctions in the instance of poor school performance on statewide tests. Also, private schools are required to be accredited in Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The degree to which private school students are subject to statewide testing and accountability pressures may influence the experiences of voucher students in private schools and their resulting outcomes.

All statewide programs contain some language that prohibits private schools from discriminating against students in some form (usually by race/ethnicity or national origin). However, only Louisiana requires that private schools have open admissions policies, and the state also assigns vouchers through a lottery. Private schools participating in the voucher program in the other five states can maintain selective admissions criteria. As such, schools can discriminately enroll students based on religion (many religious schools participate across all states) as well as ability. With such admissions criteria, it is possible that private schools may choose to enroll only the highest-achieving students who qualify for a voucher and apply to attend. It is also possible that these students may be disproportionately White or of a slightly higher socioeconomic status. I further investigate these concerns in the section that follows.

Despite the substantial number of private schools participating in statewide voucher programs, there is little evidence in most states about the quality of private schools or the reasons behind why those schools did or did not choose to participate. Austin (2015) provided evidence in Indiana that private schools that declined to participate in the voucher program did so due to concerns about increased bureaucratic regulations (Stuit & Doan, 2013). At the same time, nearly all Catholic schools and a majority of other private schools readily participated because the program aligned with their missions to serve all students, and because they were already participating in statewide testing and reporting as a result of their accreditation process (see Austin, 2015; Waddington & Berends, 2018a). The result is that a wide variety of private schools—including a number of highly rated ones—participate in Indiana’s voucher program. In contrast, Mills and Wolf (2017) found that some of the lowest-performing schools were those that participated in Louisiana.

Sorting of Students in Private Schools

While the design of statewide voucher programs generally meets the criteria that should mitigate concerns about negative social implications, it is possible that the actual implementation and participation of students in these programs tells a different story. As Nechyba (2009) described, private schools must differentiate themselves in competition with traditional public and other public choice (e.g., charter and magnet) schools for students in any local educational market. In this section, I will assess ways in which private schools in states with voucher programs may or may not have done this through cream-skimming and the potential for increased stratification.⁴

Cream-Skimming of High-Ability Students

Schools of choice face market pressures because their ultimate success is tied to recruiting and retaining students. Schools with a strong academic reputation, in part a function of students’ scholastic achievement, theoretically have a greater ability to recruit students. In fact, choice schools may be even more motivated to recruit and retain high-ability students to differentiate themselves from other schooling alternatives, as Nechyba (2009) argued. Private schools participating in voucher programs may be all the more motivated to maintain or improve their academic standing, particularly in states such as Indiana and Louisiana, where additional accountability and/or accreditation measures are in place. These concerns are also prevalent in the charter school sector, whereby charter schools seek to maintain a strong academic profile to compete with traditional public schools and other educational alternatives in the local educational market (Zimmer & Guarino, 2013; Kho, McEachin, & Zimmer, 2018).

Recent statewide voucher programs are targeted to serve not only low-income but also middle-income families. While this expansion may disproportionately serve students from families with access to more information and other resources to enroll their students in private schools, this does not necessarily mean voucher programs are cream-skimming the best students from the public sector. Rather, voucher students may be among the lowest performers in their public schools, and as a result their families seek out educational alternatives. If true, this may run counter to the cream-skimming narrative.

Early studies of voucher programs examined issues surrounding access to voucher programs based on parents’ educational attainment and the income levels of participating students compared to those who are not participating but eligible for voucher programs (Peterson, 1998; Howell & Peterson, 2000; Wolf, Howell, & Peterson, 2000). Researchers found that families with lower educational attainment and income were more likely to participate. Despite these findings, these studies do not address whether or not private schools cream-skim the highest-performing students from public schools inclusive of all students, not just those eligible to receive vouchers. As such, there is a dearth

of research across the broader school choice literature on the matter of cream-skimming in the context of voucher programs.

That said, a few studies have directly investigated issues surrounding cream-skimming. Researchers using student-level longitudinal data have generally found little difference in the baseline academic performance of students who transferred to charter schools compared to their peers who remained in the traditional public schools they left (Booker, Zimmer, & Buddin, 2006; Winters, 2017; Kho et al., 2018). In New Orleans, researchers found that high-achieving students were more likely to transfer to high-achieving schools and low-achieving students were more likely to transfer to low-achieving schools (Welsh, Duque, & McEachin, 2016). While choice schools may not selectively recruit the best students within a traditional public school, these transfer patterns in New Orleans may lead to increased stratification and sorting based on student achievement.

As mentioned, no quantitative evidence exists that directly assesses the potential for cream-skimming of public students by private schools in the context of recent statewide voucher programs. In Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio, researchers found that students who participated in voucher programs and transitioned from public to private schools were on average lower-achieving compared to the statewide average of students (Figlio & Karbownik, 2016; Mills & Wolf, 2017; Waddington & Berends, 2018a). However, it is possible that while these students were lower-achieving relative to all public students across the state, they may have been from the upper distribution of students within the public schools they left. From the qualitative perspective, Austin (2019) found that private schools rarely rejected voucher students or changed their admissions criteria. More research is needed to fully assess the presence or lack thereof regarding cream-skimming of high-ability students from public schools in the context of school vouchers.

Racial and Socioeconomic Stratification

In settings where school choice is prevalent—in both the public and the private sectors—the traditional sorting mechanisms and resulting segregation of students based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status have the potential to be reduced (Nechyba, 2009). Parents opting for choice schools consider a variety of school characteristics, including academic quality, safety and discipline, religion, and distance between their home and school (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000; Altenhofen, Berends, & White, 2016; Lareau & Goyette, 2014). Parents also consider the racial/ethnic composition of schools in their decision-making process, though this is difficult for researchers to measure (Farkas, Johnson, Immerwahr, & McHugh, 1998; Saporito & Lareau, 1999; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Goyette, Farrie, & Freely, 2012). Little is known about whether other school compositional characteristics, such as diversity along socioeconomic lines, influences decision-making.

With the broad participation of private schools across states, we might expect substantial heterogeneity in terms of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic composition. By and large, private schools do tend to enroll a greater proportion of White students from middle to higher socioeconomic backgrounds. However, in Indiana and Louisiana, large proportions of voucher students are non-White and from a lower socioeconomic background (Mills & Wolf, 2017; Waddington & Berends, 2018a). Given this, it is reasonable to predict that private schools would become more diverse along racial-ethnic and socioeconomic dimensions. DeAngelis and Burke (2017) found that the relative proportion of White students enrolled in private schools decreased from before the implementation of the voucher programs in Indiana and Louisiana to after. Also in Indiana, Waddington & Berends (2018b) found that voucher students experienced the largest achievement losses in mathematics when attending less racially and socioeconomically diverse private schools, and modest gains in English/Language Arts when attending more diverse private schools.

Beyond the aforementioned studies, little else is known about the heterogeneity or social implications of voucher effects based on school composition; most of the research on voucher programs

has focused on the average effects on student outcomes. And, while reduced stratification in private schools and improved achievement of students attending diverse private schools are promising indicators in the context of voucher-participating private schools, there is a dearth of research focusing on changes in the public schooling sector that result from the expansion of private school vouchers. Namely, researchers need to assess whether vouchers increase or reduce racial or socioeconomic stratification across all schools within local educational markets, and whether improvements in public school students' performance are truly a result of competition or changing demographics.

Emergent Issues Surrounding the Social Context of Vouchers

As described above, few research studies over the past decade have examined Nechyba's (2009) concerns about cream-skimming and stratification in voucher programs. Meanwhile, as such programs continue to grow, a number of issues are emerging surrounding the social context of vouchers. In this section, I describe five of these: 1) the academic and social integration of students into private schools; 2) meeting students' learning needs; 3) the pushout of low-performing students; 4) student transitions; and 5) unexamined peer effects.

Integration of Students within Private Schools

Researchers have paid little attention to how well students are integrated academically and socially into various types of private schools that differ by religious focus and mission. For voucher programs to be successful in this sense, private schools would need to promote integration in a manner that reduces the social and economic stratification present in the broader educational landscape (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013). This is particularly salient as voucher students transition into private school environments that largely diverge from their previous experiences. It is likely that voucher students' new schools differ in terms of curriculum, for instance, which could leave them either ahead or behind their new peers academically, depending on the nature of the differences (Rumberger, 2015). Overall, successful integration of voucher students into new private schools will be shaped by the private schools' culture (Langenkamp, 2009; Langenkamp & Carbonaro, 2018).

Waddington and Berends (2014) examined the integration of voucher students into private schools in the first two years of the voucher program in Indiana. Through interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and students in 13 private schools across the state, the researchers found that students integrated quite well socially into their new schools. However, some challenges existed in the context of academic integration, because voucher students were academically behind their private school peers and had to become accustomed to new homework expectations. These challenges emerged despite the schools' best efforts both to ensure that voucher students were, based on past records, an appropriate academic and disciplinary fit and to acclimate them during the admissions process (Austin, 2015, 2019). While these three studies shed some light on how voucher students integrate into private schools, further research is needed to understand how this changes over time as voucher programs mature, and to identify the specific mechanisms by which voucher-participating private schools help to ease new students into their schools.

Meeting Students' Learning Needs

Chubb and Moe (1990) argued that school choice provides schools with the freedom and opportunity to try new organizational and instructional approaches that may promote improved student outcomes. This market-theory orientation suggests that private schools may be better equipped to meet students' diverse learning needs. At the same time, statewide voucher programs are being implemented with a degree of regulatory criteria, including participation in statewide assessments.

Within this context, private schools in actuality may be less different than other public educational alternatives because they need to align with these institutional structures (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978).

The market-based argument for voucher programs suggests that private schools may be better equipped to meet students' learning needs (DeAngelis & Erickson, 2017). This may be true for those programs aimed at students with special learning needs (EdChoice, 2018). However, for the broader population of students considering a voucher program, private schools may fail to differentiate themselves in meaningful ways as a result of bureaucratic demands and safeguards. Further research is needed to assess just how private schools participating in voucher programs differentiate themselves academically, organizationally, and socially in ways that either promote or inhibit improved student outcomes. With this information, any successful approaches that emerge from private schools could be shared and integrated across sectors to more broadly improve student outcomes.

Pushout of Low-Performing Students

In instances where voucher students are not well integrated into private schools and/or private schools are not meeting these students' needs, students may be more likely to exit. Private schools may aid in these exit patterns by "pushing out" students who threaten a school's academic profile. The pushout of low-performing students or students with disciplinary issues by private schools in turn leaves public schools with the responsibility of educating these students, often after a mid-year transition. This is one of the criticisms levied by opponents of vouchers and the broader school choice movement (Ravitch, 2010, 2013). (For more on this topic, see Chapter 23 in this volume.)

Much of the evidence to date on the pushout of students comes from charter schools. Researchers have found that low-achieving students in charter schools exit at roughly the same rates as their low-achieving peers in traditional public schools, though charter schools may be more likely to push out students with a persistent disciplinary record (Zimmer & Guarino, 2013; Winters, 2017; Kho et al., 2018). These questions have not been explicitly examined in the context of voucher programs and private schools, despite the relatively high exit rates of students. In Indiana, nearly 25 percent of all voucher students who transition from a public to a private school exit that private school and return to the public sector after one or two years (Waddington & Berends, 2018a). Austin (2019) found that behavior is the most consistent reason behind these exits, though academics may play a role in a handful of situations, too. Researchers need to delve into this equally concerning notion of whether or not private schools are selectively dis-enrolling voucher students. In addition, further research is needed to understand the effects on students who exit and the schools into which they transition.

School Transitions

School choice programs are designed to encourage mobility, despite the fact that student mobility is associated with lower test performance (Grigg 2012; Schwartz, Steifel, & Cordes, 2017). As discussed in the earlier section on this topic, we know that for voucher students the achievement impact of transitioning from public to private school depends, by and large, on their successful integration into their new school. In contrast, we know much less about the transition of students from private to public schools, especially those who made a recent switch to a private school after receiving a voucher and are now switching back.

As these students exit voucher programs and private schools altogether—either by means of pushout, expulsion, or leaving voluntarily for other reasons—they face a change. Students who frequently switch schools experience disruptions from the academic and social contexts,

leaving them to continuously form new interpersonal connections with their peers, teachers, and broader schooling community. As mentioned above, one in four students participating in the Indiana voucher program who transitioned from public to private schools returned to a public school after one or two years (Waddington & Berends, 2018a). While exit rates may differ in other programs, researchers have yet to unpack the potential negative impacts on voucher students of returning to public schools or making multiple transitions between school sectors in a short period of time.

Peer Effects

Proponents of voucher programs have held the well-known belief that the expansion of choice options will foster competition and benefit all students across all sectors through increased competition (Friedman, 1962; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hoxby, 2003). As such, researchers have focused on the competitive effects of vouchers on the performance of public school students. (For review, see Chapter 16 in this volume.) Meanwhile, researchers and policymakers have paid less attention to the social and academic interactions between peers within a private school. Although long-standing research on private schools (see Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993) and emerging research on voucher programs (see Waddington & Berends, 2018b) have suggested that more demographically diverse private schools may contribute to the “common good,” we have no evidence regarding the performance of students in private schools based on peer interactions. For example, what are the impacts on student outcomes of Black or Latinx students based on the racial/ethnic composition of a private school? What are the impacts of voucher programs on the student outcomes of existing private school students? With little to no information about social interactions within a private school, this piece to the social context puzzle remains missing.

Conclusion

Nationwide, merely a fraction of all K–12 students participate in voucher programs that award tuition scholarships for attendance at private schools. Yet, the number of statewide programs continues to grow, and voucher programs remain a legislative consideration in many states. Thus, researchers, policymakers, and the public should be concerned about the social implications of these programs.

For the most part, voucher programs have been designed in such a way that provides access to schooling alternatives for a broad range of students from low- and middle-income families, including those with disabilities or other special learning needs. To date, the limited evidence does not suggest that private schools selectively recruit or enroll the highest ability students, nor do they deny access to students of color. Private schools tend to become more racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse than before voucher programs were implemented. Students who do find a good match to a private school are likely to be well served.

At the same time, after nearly three decades of the existence of voucher programs in the U.S., there are many questions that remain unanswered. Research has centered on the effects of programs on student academic and non-academic outcomes with little regard for the social implications of these programs. To date, no evidence exists to refute hypotheses of cream-skimming or increased racial or socioeconomic stratification that result from voucher programs. Emergent concerns such as the integration of voucher students in private schools, pushout of low-performing students, increased student mobility, and other intended and unintended peer effects are only in the early phases of being studied and addressed. Before policymakers charge forward with the latest evidenced-based results on student outcomes in support or opposition of expanding voucher programs, the pros and cons of the broader societal impacts need to be considered and empirically tested.

Notes

- 1 Across most statewide programs, vouchers are financed with the state-apportioned per-pupil dollars given to public school districts. In essence, public school districts lose that funding for each student who receives a voucher to attend a private school. Opponents of voucher programs argue that this loss of funding harms public schools, while proponents argue that voucher programs create greater efficiencies within a state's education system and are tax neutral. To date, there has been no cost-benefit analysis of a statewide voucher program to assess the validity of the claims on either side. Thus, I focus on the social impacts surrounding the distribution of students participating in voucher programs by ability and demographics.
- 2 Schools enrolling voucher students with special learning needs or disabilities in Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin receive an additional appropriation of state funds to go toward providing specialized services to meet students' needs.
- 3 Voucher students in North Carolina are required to take a nationally, norm-referenced test. The specific test is left to the discretion of the private schools, and nonvoucher private school students are not required to be tested.
- 4 Nechyba (2009) highlights two additional ways in which private schools differentiate themselves: through resource efficiency and location. Issues concerning resources efficiency are covered in more detail in Chapter 16 of this volume on the competitive effects of vouchers. Regarding location, the overwhelming majority of private schools were in existence prior to the implementation of statewide voucher programs. Unlike charter schools, private schools do not tend to locate (or re-locate) in areas with low-performing public schools.

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