

Voucher Programs in the State of Indiana: An Assessment of Resident Satisfaction

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Abstract

While voucher programs in the United States endeavor to enhance educational opportunities for students and foment competition among schools, there are major disagreements about the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of such programs including how well they engage students and their parents, how well they improve student achievement, how competitive schools become as a result of such vouchers, how well they conform to the constitutionality of separation of church and state, how fiscally beneficial they are, how equitably they are distributed, and how favorable they are to the general public. Motivated by public opinion literature, the current study examines the Indiana case (the Indiana Choice Scholarship program) assessing whether Indiana residents support this program. As to resident satisfaction, data from the Hoosier Survey collected by the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University are analyzed. While public opinion has not varied too greatly since the program's inception, this study consistently finds that affiliation with the Republican Party is significantly correlated to voucher support.

Introduction

Education, specifically public education, serves a myriad of purposes in the United States including the preservation of democracy, the acclimatization of immigrants, and the facilitation of economic mobility by enhancing one's human capital (Kraft and Furlong, 2015). Education essentially offers hope for a better quality of life. While the United States has progressively offered such hope, critics argue that this educational system has failed compared to other countries. Of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) affiliated countries for example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study of 2015 ranked the United States as 39th in math (tied with Israel), 23rd in reading (tied with Taiwan), and 25th in science (OECD, 2016). Several reasons may contribute to these deficient rankings including a shortage of competitive compensation for school teachers, less respect for the field of teaching, a lack of focus and discipline in the classroom, and more exposure to deadly violence that earlier generations did not experience (Kraft and Furlong, 2015).

Over time, persuasive calls for educational reform have materialized into national policies such as the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) in 1965, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001, and more recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESA) in 2015 among others. Subnational reform efforts have also been made such as the Common Core movement of 2009 as well as several school choice options including school choice, charter schools, and school

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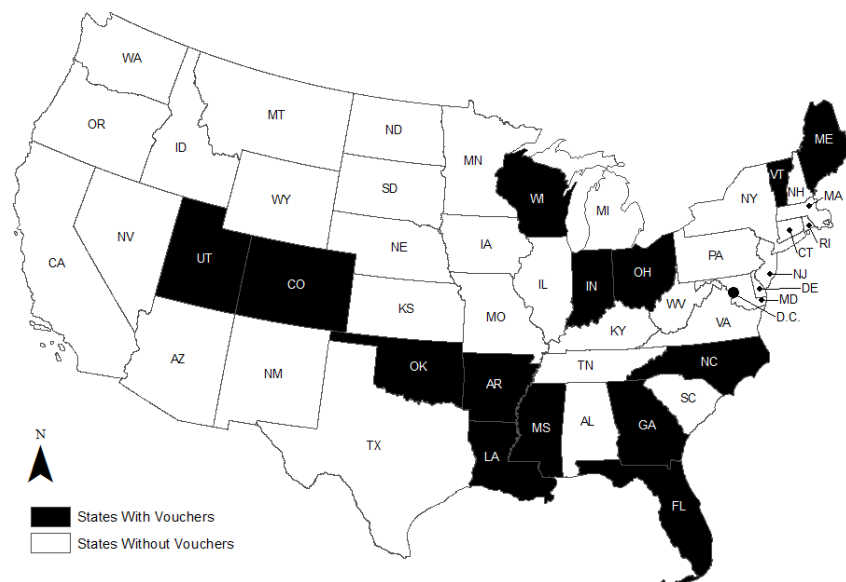
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vouchers.¹ Voucher-like mechanisms such as education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships, and individual tax credits/deductions have also attempted to offer parents more alternatives to public school education (Dynarski, 2016).

Beginning in the 1990's in the United States, school voucher programs involving government subsidized tuition coupons that can be redeemed at preferred schools have been utilized to attempt to enhance educational opportunities for students and to encourage competition among schools. Whereas school choice programs offer parents of publically educated children a choice to send their children to alternate public schools often with government monies, school vouchers offer students from public schools an opportunity to further their education in the public school system as well as the private school system including sectarian schools with government monies. Although a number of school vouchers in cities like Indianapolis, IN, have been funded through the private sector as well (Farrell and Mathews, 2006). Alternatively, charter schools are publically funded entities that are independently operated. Thus, government regulations that are typically associated with public school systems are minimized to engender a unique focus of such charter schools (i.e., Inspire Academy in Muncie, IN) (Kraft and Furlong, 2015).

School voucher programs currently function in sixteen states including Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin, as well as the District of Columbia as illustrated in Figure 1 (Friedman Foundation, 2016). The majority of such school voucher programs in the United States are focused on helping lower to middle income students or students in failing schools (Kraft and Furlong, 2015).

Figure 1. States with School Voucher Programs



¹ The term school choice is often broadly employed to include all educational reforms affording parental choice about where to educate children including voucher programs and charter schools (Kraft and Furlong, 2015, 356).

Literature Review

Questions remain regarding how well publicly funded voucher programs in the United States conform to the constitutionality of separation of church and state, how effectively they spread democratic principles, how well they engage students and their parents, how sufficiently they improve student achievement, how competitive schools become as a result of such vouchers, how fiscally beneficial they are, how equitably they are distributed, and how favorable they are to the general public. For example, supporters of school choice programs including school vouchers argue that providing parents with the choice about where to have their children educated will engage these parents to become more involved with their education. Improvements made from these vouchers will also enhance student achievement and make schools more competitive as administrators strive to improve their schools and attract more students (Kraft and Furlong, 2015; Kemerer and King, 1995; Peterson and Hassel, 1998).

Alternatively, opponents are skeptical about the purported increase of parental engagement or the advancement of student achievement resulting from school voucher programs. They also argue that such programs will negate the separation between church and state and leave the public school system in disrepair as needed tax dollars are redirected to other learning institutions (Kemerer and King, 1995).

The remainder of this paper will highlight the key bodies of literature surrounding voucher programs (separation of church and state, student achievement, competition and cost-effectiveness, public opinion) focusing on the public opinion literature. Next, this paper will examine the Indiana case (Indiana Choice Scholarship program) as it relates to public opinion over an extended time period. Lastly, it will offer several findings about how supportive Indiana residents have been of school vouchers over time and what implications these findings have for future research.

Separation of Church and State

With respect to how well publicly funded school vouchers conform to the constitutionality of separation of church and state, Giles (1998) explains that the establishment clause of the First Amendment is not violated as long as parents have the freedom to utilize such vouchers (scholarships) to enroll their child at any school regardless of religion. This “choose to use” freedom is more likely to be supported in federal courts as opposed to state courts based on preferences for the free exercise provision of the First Amendment (Kemerer and King, 1995). Generally, vouchers may go to religious schools that articulate education as their main purpose (Smith and Greenblatt, 2018). While the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of vouchers and voucher mechanisms, over time state courts have differed in their rulings based on variations in school voucher designs, judicial viewpoints, as well as the distinct wording of state constitutions. State constitutions are much less ambiguous than the federal constitution (Kemerer and King, 1995). For example, thirty seven states have modified their constitutions with Blaine amendments which preclude direct government assistance to sectarian educational institutions (Dynarski, 2016; Komer and Grady, 2016).² In *Meredith v Pence* (2013) for instance, the Indiana

² The thirty seven states with Blaine Amendments include: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York,

Supreme Court ruled in favor of the constitutionality of the Choice Scholarship Program of Indiana whereas in *Traverse City School District v. Attorney General* (1971), the Michigan Supreme Court ruled public funding either “directly or indirectly” for non-public schools as unconstitutional. Thus, without constitutional modification, Michigan does not employ school choice vouchers (Komer and Grady, 2016).

Student Achievement

Regarding student achievement, several studies illustrate positive findings for school vouchers. Employing randomized field trials, findings from Howell, Wolf, Campbell, and Peterson (2002) demonstrate that test scores for African American students who received publicly funded school vouchers improved significantly in three cities including New York, NY, Dayton, OH, and Washington, DC after two years of observation. These findings were not evident for other students including other minority students such as Latinos. Similar findings were observed by McEwan (2004) in that African American students using school vouchers encountered modest gains in overall achievement.

Findings by Greene, Peterson, and Du (1998) also indicate that students enrolled in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) made significant improvements by way of test scores in years three and four of the study (Peterson and Hassel, 1998). When the Milwaukee program was examined by Rouse (1998), findings showed improvements in math scores but not reading scores for private school attendees. Findings by Cowen caution “that models of voucher effects on student achievement are interpretable only in the context of factors underlying the ability to choose in the first place” (Cowen, 2010, p. 1).

Cowen et al (2013) demonstrate a positive correlation between voucher students attending private schools in the 8th and 9th grades and high school graduation rates as well as 4-year college enrollment/perseverance rates. Such differences remain after their study controls for several socioeconomic and demographical characteristics.

Alternatively, other studies have not successfully substantiated the positive claims made by the previous studies regarding school vouchers. Articles by Ladd (2002) and McEwan (2000) offer critical perspectives of the prevailing literature on student achievement. Examining both national and international evidence, Ladd (2002) has strong reservations about the potential effectiveness of a nation-wide voucher approach arguing that such an ambitious endeavor “is not likely to generate substantial gains in the productivity of the U.S. K-12 education system” (p. 21) and could even harm many disadvantaged students in the process. Similarly, McEwan (2000) claims that the “empirical evidence is not sufficiently compelling to justify either strong advocacy or opposition to large-scale voucher programs” (p. 103).

Focusing on smaller scale studies, findings by Farrell and Mathews (2006), Lara, Mizala, and Repetto (2011), and Dynarski (2016) support the arguments of Ladd and McEwan regarding the ineffectiveness of school vouchers on student achievement. Farrell and Mathews (2006) for example, extend the initial findings of investigative journalists from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel newspaper. Based on field observations of African American-owned and operated voucher schools in Milwaukee and confidential interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents of these schools, Farrell and Mathews learn that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program

(MPCP) does not accommodate the educational needs of Black students enrolled in voucher schools.

Next, examining the Chilean school system, Lara, Mizala, and Repetto (2011) find that private voucher education yields minor improvements in academic performance that are not always statistically significant. Lastly recent findings from Dynarski (2016) showed that public school students that obtained vouchers for private school enrollment failed to score higher in both reading and math tests compared to their public school counterparts. Their analyses of a Louisiana study (employing a random assignment experimental design) as well as an Indiana study (using time trends and a 'fixed-effects' estimator) demonstrated that students transferring from the public school system to private schools saw significant declines in achievement in these areas.

In sum, six of the eleven aforementioned articles focusing on student achievement have demonstrated varying levels of support illustrating the positive effects that student vouchers have had on student achievement while five of these articles have shown negative or negligible evidence of school voucher effectiveness. Such mixed results reflect the high level of conflict and controversy that continues to surround this policy issue.

Competition and Cost Effectiveness

Enhancing competition by improving overall school quality has also been debated in the school voucher literature. Findings from Figlio and Hart (2010) support the notion that competition is enriched when student test scores are improved. Thus, public schools in jeopardy of losing students to the voucher program in Florida demonstrated improvement in students' test scores (Figlio and Hart, 2014, 2010). Such competition enables schools that create a desirable product to prosper compelling less successful schools with less desirable products to either correct their deficiencies or leave the market. Such failing schools will be replaced with innovative and cost-effective schools ultimately benefitting families and the unique learning styles of their children (Sawhill and Smith, 1998).

Opponents such as Salisbury (2003) argue that while several states have executed school choice programs, such programs are limited in their goals of fully developing competition because they are targeted towards a small segment of the population, those in the lower income bracket. Without extending this choice more comprehensively to every child, "the potential benefits that would arise from a fully competitive education market" (Salisbury, 2003, p. 4) are nullified. Competition would therefore achieve fruition if more students were offered this opportunity of choice.

Even with this program expansion, other arguments have been made regarding the cost-effectiveness of such programs. Prothero (2015), for example, argues that according to data released by the state of Indiana, increasing eligibility rules in the Indiana Choice Scholarship program "cost the state an additional \$16 million in the 2013-2014 school year, compared to the first two years that vouchers were offered and saved the state around \$4 million. Yet, Salisbury contends that such programs offer huge fiscal benefits to the states in reducing educational costs because the vouchers amount to "less money than is spent per student in public schools" according to voucher/voucher mechanisms program results in "Arizona, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Florida, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Vermont" (Salisbury, 2005, p. 22). Thus according to Salisbury (2003, 2005) making more students eligible for school vouchers has the potential to augment competition and improve cost-effectiveness overall.

Public Opinion

Public opinion and parental satisfaction regarding publicly funded school vouchers and voucher-like mechanisms has varied according to national and subnational accounts. Nationwide support for school vouchers vacillated “from 44% in 1998 to 46% in 2002 ... to 38% in 2005” (Farrell and Mathews, 2006, p. 520). Other studies convey higher percentages of support for these voucher programs. Employing “a nationally representative survey” involving 4,700 adults, Moe (2001) finds that 60-68% of this sample supports vouchers illustrating that income, education, race, and religion significantly affect voucher approval. For example, respondents who earned less than \$20,000 supported vouchers (73%) more readily than the respondents earning \$60,000 or greater (57%). The respondents with less than a high school degree supported vouchers (70%) more than those with a postgraduate degree (49%). Racial minority respondents including blacks (75%) and Hispanics (71%) favored vouchers more than whites (63%). Catholics (72%) supported vouchers more than Protestants (62%) (Moe, 2001, p. 214-215).

At the national level, the relationship between partisanship and support for vouchers is examined by Gokcekus, Phillips, and Tower (2004). They find that Members of Congress from the House of Representatives who receive contributions from the American Federation of Teachers and/or the National Educational Association are less likely to support school choice legislation. Also, districts with large African American populations and/or republican representation are more likely to support school choice legislation.

Sub-nationally, several studies by Metcalf (1999), Howell and Peterson (2002), and Witte (2000), all demonstrate positive findings for parental satisfaction and school vouchers programs. Furthermore, mixed findings regarding school choice (voucher) support are noted in Brasington and Hite (2012), as well as Burbank and Levin (2015). For example, Brasington and Hite (2012) examine the relationship between school quality (public proficiency) and support for school choice including vouchers in Ohio. Using survey data, they find that residents living in “assigned public school district(s) with strong proficiency test passage (rates)” (p. 453) do not favor school choice. Also, residents who generally approve of their state’s “typical public school district” (p. 453) do not favor school choice. Lastly, residents who live in close proximity to decent private schools tend to favor school choice.

Burbank and Levin (2015) assess the relationship between community attachment and school voucher support in Utah. Employing referendum and demographic data, the community attachment model is somewhat supported after controlling for “partisan and socioeconomic” effects. Thus, long-term homeowners, rural residents, and residents in farming occupations all demonstrate less support for school vouchers. Clearly, “the nature of community life” is a critical component to public school voucher support (Burbank and Levin, 2015, p. 1169).

Bali (2008) considers the relationship between “ideological predisposition, self-interest, and racially based incentives” and support for several educational reform initiatives including vouchers for private schools (Prop. No. 38) in the state of California (2008). Regarding race for example, using exit poll, Bali finds that Hispanic voters did not support vouchers while Black voters did support vouchers.

In sum, public opinion regarding school vouchers according to national and subnational accounts is not consistently positive or negative. Many demographical and political factors affect the support of this highly salient yet notably contentious policy area. In light of such controversy, how do state residents of one of the largest voucher programs feel about the growth of this school choice option? Do certain groups of individuals favor school vouchers more readily than others?

The following study will examine the Indiana Choice Scholarship program and its connection to public opinion in Indiana over an extended time period, especially as the program's eligibility requirements have become more inclusive.

Case Study: Indiana Choice Scholarship Program

One of the largest voucher programs nationwide operates in Indiana (the Indiana Choice Scholarship program).³ Enacted in 2011, Indiana school vouchers are currently aimed at assisting lower to middle income families. In 2012, roughly 3,900 students were supported by the program to attend private schools, the majority of which are religious in orientation compared to more than 29,000 students in 2015 (Prothero, 2015). In 2017, 34,645 students benefitted from such vouchers (Friedman Foundation, 2016). Since its inception, the unsurpassed growth of school vouchers for private education can be attributed to significant changes in rules (legislation) which progressively expand eligibility as well as the precipitous judicial acceptance of their legality (Prothero, 2015). Expanding eligibility for the program is afforded through broader income categories, including families with disabled children. Specifically, in 2014, "students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Plan and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of the FRL [federal free and reduced-price lunch program] (\$87,136 for a family of four in 2013-14)" (Friedman Foundation, 2014, p. 37) became eligible for these Choice Scholarships.

Eligibility expansion is also facilitated by cap removals on the number of students allowed to participate in the program and by amended categories of program admissibility. For example, in 2014, "students who attended or would attend a public school designated "F" and who (were) from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL" (Friedman Foundation, 2013, p.37) became eligible for the Choice Scholarship Program "even if they had never attended their local district school" (Prothero, 2015, p. 6). Of course other provisions that had been in place from the program's beginning also did not require that students receiving these scholarships necessarily attend their local district schools. For example, from 2011 onward, students who "received a scholarship in the previous school year from a non-profit organization that qualifies for certification as an [Scholarship Granting Organization] SGO" were also eligible to receive a Choice Scholarship in the following grade. This tax credit scholarship needs to amount to \$500 or more in order for the student to qualify.⁴ Thus, from the start of the program, it was not always a prerequisite for students to attend a local district school before meeting the criteria for private school education. According to one principal from a Muncie choice school, this SGO allowance serves the voucher community effectively as more than half of the student body at this school benefits from such vouchers.⁵

From a state-wide perspective, white recipients have been the largest group of voucher beneficiaries ranging from 46% to 61% and averaging 56% in the 2011-2017 time period. Black

³ See Appendix A which illustrates data concerning enrollment in the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program, voucher amounts, participating schools, and recipient demographics over time according to data replicated from the ABCs of School Choice (2012-2017 Editions) as well as the Indiana Department of Education, Office of School Finance 2016 and 2017.

⁴ In 2014, this provision was extended to siblings of students who received a minimum of a \$500 tax-credit scholarship in the previous school year from a Scholarship Granting Organization (Friedman Foundation, 2014, p.37).

⁵ See Appendix B for an annual list of student eligibility guidelines according to The ABCs of School Choice (2012-2017 Editions) and Appendix C for the recipient school obligations according to data taken from The ABCs of School Choice (2015-2017 Editions) by the Friedman Foundation.

recipients have ranged from 12% to 24% and averaged 17% within the same allotment of time.⁶ Due to the nature of the program's growth and the demographical characteristics of its benefactors since 2011, how supportive are Indiana residents overall?

Intervention Analysis

Employing Hoosier Survey data from the Ball State University Bowen Center for Public Affairs, the current study examines how supportive Indiana residents are about the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program and the growth of this program as eligibility requirements have expanded.⁷ This study asks whether public opinion has changed over time in general and according to particular populations, especially Republicans and African Americans as strongly indicated in the literature. Specifically, as eligibility rules (IV) have expanded, has public opinion regarding school vouchers become more supportive overall and within these subgroups of Indiana residents (DV)? In other words, this study compares the attitudinal variations of Indiana residents against the massive growth in school vouchers over time both generally and specifically to the aforementioned subgroups.

The available data from the Hoosier Survey are itemized in Table 4. Consistent data are recorded for the years 2011, 2012, and 2015 reflecting the public's support for the use of vouchers.⁸ While school voucher questions were not included in the 2013, 2014, and 2016 surveys, the 2017 survey did include a question about vouchers.⁹ Taken from the annual summaries of the Bowen Center for Public Affairs, these figures provide a snapshot of the surveyed population overall rather than a breakdown of specific populations.

In the next section, the breakdown of specific demographical categories is captured through binary logistic regressions. Operationalization of the bivariate independent variables for these regressions include race (Black/African American or not Black/African American), party affiliation (Republican or not Republican), income level (more than \$50,000 or \$50,000 or less), educational achievement (college graduate (4-year degree or higher) or not a college graduate), gender (male or female), age (50+ or under 50), and type of community (urban or not urban). Operationalization of the bivariate dependent variable for the years under analysis (2011, 2012, 2015, and 2017) include whether or not the respondents supports vouchers. In 2011 and 2012 for example, the respondent was asked "Last year the state passed legislation allowing families to use tax-supported vouchers to move their kids out of public and into private/charter schools. Do you support/oppose expanded use of vouchers or don't you have an opinion?" Furthermore, in 2015, the respondent was asked "Do you support the use of vouchers in this way or would you prefer the money go directly to local public schools instead? Alternatively, in 2017, the respondent was

⁶ See Appendix A

⁷ Conducted annually for the Bowen Center for Public Affairs by Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRAI), the Hoosier Survey reflects a random selection of approximately 600 Indiana residents by landline/cell phone.

⁸ In 2011 and 2012, the question asked "Last year the state passed legislation allowing families to use tax-supported vouchers to move their kids out of public and into private/charter schools. Do you support/oppose expanded use of vouchers or don't you have an opinion?"

In 2015, the question asked, "Do you support the use of vouchers in this way or would you prefer the money go directly to local public schools instead?"

⁹ In 2017, the question asked, "The state allows families to use tax supported vouchers to send their children to the school of their choice. Should the state require private and charter schools receiving vouchers to meet state performance standards?"

asked “The state allows families to use tax supported vouchers to send their children to the school of their choice. Should the state require private and charter schools receiving vouchers to meet state performance standards?”

Findings

Table 4 illustrates the years with available data pertaining to overall Indiana resident support for vouchers including consistent data from the years 2011, 2012, and 2015. School voucher support fluctuated from 2011 to 2015 as program eligibility expanded but ultimately increased (from 34% to 28% to 39%) although not by a statistically significant amount.

Table 4

Indiana Resident Responses to Questions regarding School Vouchers

	Support use of vouchers	Support state requiring private/charter schools receiving vouchers to meet state performance standards
2011	34% (support expanded use of vouchers) 37% (oppose their expansion) 28% (no opinion)	
2012	28% (support expanded use of vouchers) 36% (oppose their expansion) 35% (no opinion)	
2013		
2014		
2015	39% (support use of vouchers for private and charter schools) 57% (would prefer the money go directly to local public schools) 4% (no opinion)	
2016		
2017		78% (yes) 15% (no) 7% (no opinion)

Tables 5-7 illustrate the preliminary results of this regression. In tables 5 and 6, party affiliation (Republican) correlates significantly with voucher support while other demographical variables including income level (Under50K), educational achievement (CollegeGrad), gender (Male), age (UnderAge50), race (Black), and type of community (Urban) never reach significant levels of correlation during these years of observation. Yet in 2015 (table 7), party affiliation and race correlate significantly with voucher support. Furthermore, in 2017 (table 8), when asked about whether “the state should require private and charter schools receiving vouchers to meet state performance standards,” only race correlates significantly with supporting this requirement. Thus, Republicans support the use of vouchers initially, and both Republicans and African Americans support the use of vouchers after several years of their existence, but recently only African Americans tend to support the use of state mandated performance measures in private and charter schools receiving vouchers.

Table 5

Levels of support for vouchers according to several demographical characteristics (2011)

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Republican	.600	.211	8.081	.004	1.822
Under 50K	-.205	.227	.820	.365	.814
College Grad	.351	.240	2.129	.145	1.420
Male	-.152	.198	.592	.442	.859
Under Age 50	.098	.198	.245	.621	1.103
Black or African American	.466	.357	1.703	.192	1.593
Urban	.188	.216	.761	.383	1.207
Constant	-.872	.263	11.001	.001	.418

Table 6

Levels of support for vouchers according to several demographical characteristics (2012)

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Republican	.675	.215	9.885	.002	1.963
Under 50K	-.018	.218	.007	.934	.982
College Grad	-.235	.239	.970	.325	.791
Male	.306	.202	2.302	.129	1.358
Under Age 50	-.074	.205	.132	.717	.928
Black or African American	-.071	.400	.032	.859	.931
Urban	.233	.211	1.214	.271	1.262
Constant	-1.224	.254	23.253	.000	.294

Table 7

Levels of support for vouchers according to several demographical characteristics (2015)

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Republican	1.107	.204	29.558	.000	3.027
Income is 50K or less	-.098	.201	.239	.625	.907
4-year degree or higher	.149	.214	.489	.485	1.161
Male	-.100	.191	.277	.599	.905
Under Age 50	.092	.204	.205	.651	1.096
Black or African American	.940	.384	5.999	.014	2.560
Urban	.189	.212	.793	.373	1.208
Constant	-.917	.237	15.002	.000	.400

Table 8

Levels of support for vouchers according to several demographical characteristics (2017)

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Republican	-.142	.324	.192	.661	.868
Income 50K or less	-.184	.307	.359	.549	.832
4-year degree or higher	.014	.347	.002	.967	1.015
Male	.230	.291	.624	.429	1.258
Under Age 50	-.156	.292	.285	.594	.856
Black or African American	-.789	.425	3.452	.063	.454
Urban	-.153	.317	.232	.630	.858
Constant	2.001	.369	29.410	.000	7.396

Conclusion

Championed by the current administration, school vouchers and voucher like mechanisms have become more prevalent methods of educational reform in the United States within the last three decades although their validity has been questionable. Their constitutionality has been more readily supported at the federal level as opposed to the state level, their degrees of success via student achievement have been mixed, their association with competition and cost effectiveness has varied, and public approval of such vouchers at the national and sub-national levels has fluctuated.

Examining one of the largest voucher programs in the United States, the Indiana Choice Scholarship program has progressively grown since its birth in 2011 assisting 34,645 recipients in 2017 (a 788% increase) due to expanding eligibility guidelines and swift judicial acceptance of its legality. The current study demonstrates levels of public approval of this program within the state of Indiana overall and according to several demographical characteristics. Consistently, this study finds that affiliation with the Republican Party is significantly correlated to voucher support. Eventually, Republican respondents are joined by African American respondents demonstrating their support for vouchers in 2015. Lastly, only African Americans tend to support the use of state mandated performance measures in private and charter schools receiving vouchers. Thus, this study does not find a significant correlation between the affiliation with the Republican Party and support for such performance benchmarks in choice schools or charter schools. Revisiting the other key bodies of literature surrounding school vouchers, future research will examine why Republicans support school vouchers to such an extent looking at the cost effectiveness argument for example. It will hypothesize that as the effects of eligibility standards wane, school vouchers become significantly more cost effective. Thus, saving money is arguably the primary motivation behind such vouchers in the state of Indiana.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Indiana Choice Scholarship Program Data (The ABCs of School Choice 2012-2017 and the Indiana Department of Education, Office of School Finance 2016-2017)

Editions	Enrollment	Voucher Amounts (Average Scholarship Value)	Schools Participating (IDOE)	Prior Year Public School Requirement	Recipient Demographics [IDOE]
2012	3,919 (2011-12)	NA	241	NA	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native: NA Black: 24.11% Asian: 1.46% Hispanic: 20.30% White: 46.38% Multiracial: 7.34% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: NA
2013	9,324 (2012-13) or 9,139 (2012-13) (IDOE)	\$4,091	289	Yes	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native: .28% Black: 20.30% Asian: 1.62% Hispanic: 19.00% White: 51.47% Multiracial: 7.18% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: .15%

2014	19,809 (2013-14)	\$3,962 (2012-13)	313	Conditional	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native: .24% Black: 17.03% Asian: 1.39% Hispanic: 18.42% White: 56.40% Multiracial: 6.45% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: .07%
2015	29,146 (2014-15) or 29,148 (2014-15) (IDOE)	\$3,986 (2013-14)	314	Conditional	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native: .19% Black: 14.35% Asian: 1.47% Hispanic: 16.68% White: 61.05% Multiracial: 6.17% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: .09%
2016	32,686 (2015-16)	\$3,977 (2014-15)	316	Conditional	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native: .13% Black: 13.21% Asian: 1.46% Hispanic: 18.22% White: 60.85% Multiracial: 6.06% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: .07%
2017	34,645 (2016-17) or 34,299 (2016-17) (IDOE)	\$4,024 (2015-16)	313	Conditional	Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native: .16% Black: 12.40% Asian: 1.65% Hispanic: 19.37% White: 60.28% Multiracial: 6.07% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: .08%

Appendix B

Indiana Choice Scholarship Program Student Eligibility Guidelines (The ABC's of School Choice 2012-2017)

Editions	Student Eligibility
2012	Eligible students include: (1) Children entering grades 1-12 who attended a public school (including a charter school) for the preceding two semesters and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, which is approximately \$61,000 for a family of four, in the previous year; (2) students enrolled in kindergarten; (3) students who received a scholarship in the previous school year from a nonprofit organization that qualifies for certification as an SGO ; or (4) received a voucher in the previous school year under this program.
2013	Eligible students include (1) children entering grades 1-12 who attended a public school (including a charter school) for the preceding two semesters and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of the federal free and reduced-price lunch program (\$63,964 for a family of four in 2013); (2) students enrolled in kindergarten; (3) students who received a tax-credit scholarship in the previous school year from a Scholarship Granting Organization ; or (4) received a voucher in the previous school year under this program.

2014	Children must be between ages five and 22 to participate. Eligible students include: (1) students who attended a public school (including a charter school) for the preceding two semesters and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL (\$65,352 for a family of four in 2013-2014), (2) students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Plan and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL (\$87,136 for a family of four in 2013-14), (3) students who attended or would attend a public school designated “F” and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL, (4) students or siblings of students who received a minimum of a \$500 tax-credit scholarship in the previous school year from a Scholarship Granting Organization , or (5) students who received a voucher in the previous school year under this program and are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL.
2015	Children must be between the ages five and 22 to participate. Eligible students include: (1) students who attended a public school (including a charter school) for the preceding two semesters and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL (\$66,184 for a family of four in 2014-15), (2) students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Plan and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL (\$88,246 for a family of four in 2014-15), (3) students who attended or would attend a public school designated “F” and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL, (4) students or siblings of students who received a minimum of a \$500 tax-credit scholarship in the previous school year from a Scholarship Granting Organization , or (5) students who received a voucher in the previous school year under this program and are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL.
2016	Children must be between the ages five and 22 to participate. Eligible students include: (1) students who attended a public school (including a charter school) for the preceding two semesters and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL (\$67,295 for a family of four in 2015-16), (2) students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Plan and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL (\$89,726 for a family of four in 2015-16), (3) students who attended or would attend a public school designated “F” and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL, (4) students or siblings of students who received a minimum of a \$500 tax-credit scholarship in the previous school year from a Scholarship Granting Organization , or (5) students who received a voucher in the previous school year under this program and are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL.
2017	Children must be between the ages five and 22 to participate. Eligible students include: (1) students who attended a public school (including a charter school) for the preceding two semesters and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL (\$67,433 for a family of four in 2016-17), (2) students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Plan and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL (\$89,910 for a family of four in 2016-17), (3) students who attended or would attend a public school designated “F” and who are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 150 percent of FRL, (4) students or siblings of students who received a minimum of a \$500 tax-credit scholarship in the previous school year from a Scholarship Granting Organization , or (5) students who received a voucher in the previous school year under this program and are from families earning up to (but not exceeding) 200 percent of FRL.

Friedman Foundation For Educational Choice. The ABCs Of School Choice: The Comprehensive guide to every private school choice program in America (2012-2017 Editions), Ed Choice, Indianapolis, IN.

Appendix C

Indiana Choice Scholarship Program School Requirements (The ABCs of School Choice 2015-2017)

Edition	School Requirements
2015	Be accredited by either the state board or a national or regional accreditation agency that is recognized by the state board.

	<p>Comply with health and safety codes</p> <p>Must not discriminate on basis of race, color or national origin</p> <p>Conduct criminal background checks on employees</p> <p>Submit to the state financial reporting on the amount of government funding received, funding disbursed, and school's total disbursements.</p> <p>Administer the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) program and report to the state data for A-F ratings including ISTEP scores and graduation rates (to remain eligible to accept new scholarship students, a school must not be rated as D or F for two or more consecutive years)</p> <p>Must grant the state full access to its premises for observing classroom instruction and reviewing any instructional materials and curriculum</p> <p>Provide civic and charter education and display related historical documents</p>
2016	<p>Be accredited by either the state board or a national or regional accreditation agency that is recognized by the state board.</p> <p>Comply with health and safety codes</p> <p>Must not discriminate on basis of race, color or national origin</p> <p>Conduct criminal background checks on employees</p> <p>Administer the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) program and report to the state data for A-F ratings including ISTEP scores, graduation rates, and college and career readiness factors (to remain eligible to accept new scholarship students, a school must not be rated as "D" or "F" for two or more consecutive years)</p> <p>Must grant the state full access to its premises for observing classroom instruction and reviewing any instructional materials and curriculum.</p> <p>Provide civic and character education and display related historical documents</p>
2017	<p>Be accredited by either the state board or a national or regional accreditation agency that is recognized by the state board.</p> <p>Comply with health and safety codes</p> <p>Must not discriminate on basis of race, color or national origin</p> <p>Conduct criminal background checks on employees</p> <p>Administer the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) program and report to the state data for A-F ratings including ISTEP scores and graduation rates (to remain eligible to accept new scholarship students, a school must not be rated as D or F for two or more consecutive years)</p> <p>Must grant the state full access to its premises for observing classroom instruction and reviewing any instructional materials and curriculum</p> <p>Provide civic and charter education and display related historical documents</p>