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## HOW HAS THE LOUISIANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AFFECTED STUDENTS?

A Comprehensive Summary of Effects after Two Years

By Jonathan N. Mills, Anna J. Eggle, and Patrick J. Wolf

One of the central debates about school reform is whether or not school choice improves student outcomes. School choice reforms, which comprise a broad category of policies aimed at improving public education through the introduction of market forces that may stimulate customer choice and competition between schools, have grown particularly popular since the 1990s. Private school vouchers, which provide public funds for students to attend K-12 private schools, are one example of an education reform that introduces choice and competition. This evaluation focuses on the impacts of the voucher program known as the Louisiana Scholarship Program, addressing four research questions to determine its direct and indirect effects on Louisiana's students.

Louisiana is one of the few states whose educational performance has lagged behind national averages for decades. In an experiment with publicly funded scholarships for students to attend private schools in 2012, the pilot version of the Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) was expanded statewide with the passage of Act 1 of the 2012 Louisiana state legislative session. Study 1 assesses students enrolled in the expanded program in 2012-13, with roughly 5,000 applicants receiving scholarships. The program has continued to expand rapidly every year since then, with nearly 7,000 scholarships awarded in the 2014-15 school year.

This brief summarizes the early results of an ongoing evaluation of the LSP, examining how the program has impacted both individual participants and the educational system as a whole. Four questions are addressed:

1. How did usage of an LSP scholarship affect student achievement?
2. How do self-reported measures of non-cognitive skills and political tolerance differ between LSP scholarship recipients and non-recipients?