

# **An Evaluation of Findings from Cleveland's State-Funded Voucher Program**

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*An Evaluation of Findings from Cleveland's State-Funded Voucher Program*

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## **Executive Summary**

This study examines the results of multiple evaluations of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program (CTSP), a state-funded voucher program, by exploring extant evaluations and literature. Attention will be given to the following research question: Does participation in the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program have the hypothesized positive effect on traditional public school students' academic achievement? Cleveland's voucher program provides an ideal contextualized setting for ascertaining the extent to which school choice programs afford poor families the same educational options available to affluent families. This study concludes that overall there are no statistically significant gains in voucher students' academic achievement. In fact, it appears that some voucher students performed slightly worse in math. The program does, however, afford low-income students the opportunity to attend private secular or religious schools in accordance with the program's initial design and intent.



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## Introduction

Public schools have notorious problems such as finding and hiring qualified teachers, poor or no safety and-or security, dilapidated facilities, and extremely low-performing students, all of which speaks eloquently and desperately to the exigent need for education reform. What is needed is a systemic change in educational practices based on a review of the current curriculum, operational restructuring, and the hiring of a new administration. Some of the most salient existential challenges that face public education are *accountability* (holding public schools and their administrators responsible), *performance* (how well or poorly a school is performing), and hiring and retaining *qualified* teachers (making sure that teachers have the right credential/certifications).

Education is of the utmost importance in America, for it is the means by which members of our society become literate and develop the fundamental skills they need to have a quality life in the civilized world. Without a quality education, our youth will augment and perpetuate the burgeoning disadvantaged and dispossessed element of our society. It is not an exaggeration to say that those youth who are deprived of a quality education are less likely to attend college, less likely to find a high paying job, and more likely to need government assistance to provide a means of income or supplement their limited income. Unfortunately, the attainment of a “good” education is not a viable option for many of our youth (so-called minorities in particular), as educational choice for them is a paradisiacal luxury that they, unfortunately, may likely never experience.

If parents are dissatisfied with the public educational system, they are semi-powerless to bring about any kind of tangible, long-lasting change. They can, of course, try to change the system by writing letters to administrators and political leaders, and by proactively engaging and challenging the school system to undergo reform. Even so, it takes time and resources to effect change in the public education system; the process is invariably slow and tedious. This is why the federal government has had to step in and establish laws with respect to public education—a right that was once exclusively at the discretion of state and local government.

### **Federal Involvement in Education**

There are several noteworthy historical events that have provoked federal involvement in public education. One of the most prominent events that served as a catalyst for federal involvement in public education is the landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954, 347 U.S. 483). This ruling brought federal scrutiny to public education in general and to the educational needs of the disadvantaged in particular. The law states that segregation of white and black children in public schools on the basis of race denies black children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The Supreme Court took notice of and addressed the critical need to improve or correct the deficiencies that were impediments to learning for black children, making it unequivocally clear that the “separate but equal doctrine” (adopted in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896, 163 U.S. 537) has no place in public education.

Another noteworthy event that has educational and historical significance is the passage of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. According to Kenneth K. Wong, the ESEA is arguably the most important federal program to influence public education over the



last four decades.<sup>1</sup> With the passage of this act, the preservation of state and local autonomy was irreversibly weakened by federal intrusion. It is instructive to note that the ESEA's involvement in public education signaled the movement of the federal government from behind the curtains of obscurity to center stage of education reform. The passage of the ESEA ushered in a new era where the federal government was unprecedentedly involved in education policy.

In 1993, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report to the Secretary of Education, then Honorable T. H. Bell, and to the American people that disclosed the problems facing educational institutions in the U.S. The report, which was entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, stated that children in the U.S. were underperforming students in other countries. The purpose of the 18 month study was to “generate reform of our educational system in fundamental ways and to renew the Nation's commitment to schools and colleges of high quality throughout the length and breadth of our land.”<sup>2</sup>

The Commission concluded that declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way in which the educational process itself is often conducted. The report cited three disturbing facts about American public schools and about American students' injudicious use of time: (1) compared to other nations, American students spend much less time on school work; (2) time spent in the classroom and on homework is often used ineffectively; and (3) schools are not doing enough to help students develop either the study skills required to use time well or the willingness to spend more time on school work. In a word,

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth K. Wong, “The Politics of Education,” in *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., eds., Virginia Gray and Russell L. Hanson (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, A Division of Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2008), 351.

<sup>2</sup> David P. Gardner, et al., *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education United States Department of Education by The National Commission on Excellence in Education* ( April 1983), under “Settings,” [http://datacenter.spps.org/sites/2259653e-ffb3-45ba-8fd6-04a024ecf7a4/uploads/SOTW\\_A\\_Nation\\_at\\_Risk\\_1983.pdf](http://datacenter.spps.org/sites/2259653e-ffb3-45ba-8fd6-04a024ecf7a4/uploads/SOTW_A_Nation_at_Risk_1983.pdf) (accessed June 10, 2010).

the Commission's report highlighted the deficiencies within the American public education system and brought national attention to the need for education reform.

The most recent educational reform policy is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 2002. The NCLB established accountability standards and allows for state takeover of failing districts. NCLB allows parents to take their children out of failing schools in an attempt to close the achievement gaps of racial and ethnic subgroups, as well as income subgroups.<sup>3</sup> This law mandates annual testing of students at the elementary level in core subject areas. It also mandates the hiring of highly qualified teachers, while granting authoritative power to state and local agencies to take "corrective action" (replace staff, design and implement new programs, revise curricula, revisit pedagogy, etc.) to reform failing schools.<sup>4</sup>

The NCLB has brought heightened attention to failing schools. States are now required to disclose the fact that a school is failing; and if a school is failing, parents have a right to know and a right to transfer their children to successful schools. Because this information is readily available, parents are now well aware of how a particular school is performing. This newfound knowledge, coupled with a growing concern for the quality of public education, has motivated parents to favor government programs that allow parents to choose the school (public/private; secular/religious) that their children will attend.

With this intense scrutiny of the public education system by the federal government, state and local agencies have begun to address deficiencies in teacher quality, school security, academic standards and school curricular. What's more, local government has begun to monitor and address the dearth of equal educational opportunities for disadvantaged students, as well as the poor physical conditions of schools. In response to these demands, states have proposed and

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<sup>3</sup> Wong, 352-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

adopted innovative reform initiatives. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in enrollments to voucher-friendly private schools, charter schools, and religious-affiliated schools, not to mention the increased number of parents who have chosen to home-school their children.

### **Market-like Approach to Education**

In order to promote higher educational achievement, policymakers have begun to advocate a market-like approach to education—an approach that offers competitive choices in education. This entails competition between charter schools, subsidized private schools, home-school, and voucher-participating schools. According to Kim K. Metcalf, “The school choice movement—the notion of providing children and families with options for the school and educational program in which they participate without regard for the neighborhood in which they live—includes a broad range of approaches.”<sup>5</sup> Pro-choice supporters believe that educational choice is the savior of our deteriorating public school system. Competition, they argue, will lead to an improved educational experience for students. Anti-voucher opponents argue that educational choice will bring about the death of public education, the common school tradition, integrated education, and the general commitment of the nation to education for all Americans.<sup>6</sup>

It is no secret that private schools have been more successful in terms of educating and preparing students for college and life. To be sure, students attending private schools typically score higher on standardized tests, have cultivated disciplined study habits, and attend college at a higher rate. They are also more likely to receive better paying jobs and more opportunities for

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<sup>5</sup> Kim K. Metcalf and Polly A. Tait, “Free Market Policies and Public Education: What Is the Cost of Choice?,” *Phi Delta Kappan* (September 1999), 66. In regard to school choice, Metcalf and Tait list the following examples: magnet schools, alternative schools, charter schools, tax credits for private school tuition, intra-district choice plans, inter-district choice plans and alternative programs within a single school (66).

<sup>6</sup>John F. Witte, *The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America’s First Voucher Program* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

advancement.<sup>7</sup> The truth of the matter is that poor preparation in the early years of a student's life will inevitably lead to poor performances in high school and college, in some, not all, cases. Without a solid educational foundation, our youth will not be competitive in society. Pro-voucher advocates argue that it is a matter of time before the public educational structure crumbles to its demise. The public education system is, as they see it, irreparably broke.

This passionately robust debate has sparked many innovative ideas from individuals and organizations who are tirelessly searching for an answer to this seemingly insoluble educational quandary. In order to remedy this educational quandary, policymakers and parents have turned optimistically to educational choice programs like vouchers. Herbert J. Walberg defines education vouchers as “grants to parents to cover some or all of the cost of private school tuition.”<sup>8</sup> The grants themselves can be publicly funded, called “vouchers,” or privately funded, called “scholarships.”<sup>9</sup> The voucher program is an educational reform measure designed to facilitate and accelerate the amelioration of America's beleaguered public education system by offering parents the opportunity to choose a successful private school rather than to remain in a failing public school.

The voucher program is fast becoming a viable option for those parents who want their children to attend successful private schools. In his analysis of voucher programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee, Nathan A. Benefield says that the ideology behind the voucher program is that it provides recipients with the opportunity for a superior education at a private school.<sup>10</sup> Parents, to be sure, are cognizant of the fact that education determines how successful their children will be in society; therefore, parents want their children to receive the best education possible. Parents

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<sup>7</sup> Nathan A. Benefield, *Publicly Funded School Voucher Programs: A Policy Analysis* (Dissertation.com, 2001), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert J. Walberg, *School Choice: The Findings* Walberg (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2007), 35.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Benefield, 4.

and educators alike are aware of the fact that a school's academic performance and students' achievement levels go hand-in-hand. For parents who are involved in their children's education, there is nothing more desirable and indispensable than a good education.

### **History of the Educational Vouchers**

The idea of educational vouchers is attributed to Milton Friedman (1955), an economist and Nobel Prize recipient. In 1962, Friedman wrote a captivating article on educational vouchers that was widely read and well circulated. Friedman proposed that the government subsidize schooling by giving parents vouchers redeemable for *a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on approved educational services*.<sup>11</sup> His thesis is that school choice promotes greater competition among schools, which in turn forces schools to improve the quality of their schools with innovative approaches to education. He proposed that parents be granted the liberty to choose an approved institution of their choice (e.g., "private enterprises" or "non-profit institutions") and pay for their children's tuition with government funds. The role of government would be decentralized in the operation of educational institutions. That is to say, instead of paying directly for the costs of running educational institutions, the government would be limited to insuring that schools meet content and curricula standards and maintain minimum sanitary standards.

In the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare set up a voucher experiment with a failing school district in Alum Rock, California. After negotiating with the school, a proposal was adopted that permitted students to transfer among public schools (with the exclusion of private schools). The proposal never materialized. With the election of Ronald

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<sup>11</sup> Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 89.

Reagan as president (1981-1989), the government again became interested in educational vouchers. The voucher movement, as it is commonly called, was linked to parents' interest in privatization of education. Reagan's administration proposed and advocated educational vouchers as means of educational choice for students of failing schools. The 105<sup>th</sup> Congress proposed three major voucher bills (the America Community Renewal Act, 1977; Senate Bill 1 [introduced by Senator Trent Lott (R—Miss.)]; and the Safe and Affordable Schools Act) that were either defeated in the House or Senate or through filibuster. All of the proposed bills targeted low-income families and included religious schools. As of the early to late 90's, there were proposals enacted in only two states: Milwaukee (1990) and Cleveland (1995).<sup>12</sup>

### **The Cleveland Voucher Program**

The Cleveland voucher program is situated in Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD), which has 75,000 students across 130 schools. As a policy alternative, the voucher program is seen as a means by which a quality education can be offered to disadvantaged families who cannot afford to send their children to private schools. School choice plans permit families and students to choose between public and private schools at the state's expense.

The program provides grants in the form of money (vouchers) to low-income families that may be used at authorized private schools.<sup>13</sup> Cleveland's program is one of two examples—Milwaukee being the first (1990)—where substantial public monies have been allocated to private primary and secondary schools.<sup>14</sup> It is hypothesized that the students enrolled in voucher programs are experiencing higher levels of academic achievement than those students attending

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<sup>12</sup> Witte, 34-5.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Booth Fowler et al., *Religion and Politics in America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 235.

<sup>14</sup> Witte, 74.

public schools, and that this proves that vouchers are an effective means with which to improve the quality of education that our youth receive.<sup>15</sup>

No policy is without political and public critics. The Cleveland voucher program/experiment is no exception. Advocates of educational choice laud the program for its innovativeness and flexibility in terms of allowing parents to proactively choose which schools their children will attend. Opponents denigrate the program, citing, first, that it violates the Constitution, and, second, that it will lead to the demise of the public education system. The attractiveness of the program is that it puts disadvantaged children on semi-equal educational footing with those who can afford to send their children to private schools.

### **Evolution of the Cleveland Voucher Program**

The voucher system in Cleveland was adopted as an alternative to public education. The public schools in Cleveland have a reputation of performing at embarrassingly low levels. In fact, federal officials ranked the condition of school facilities in Ohio last among all 50 states. In 1995 a state judge declared the local school board unfit to govern the schools and handed direct control to the state, which maintained control until 1999. In response to the state judge's ruling, pro-voucher advocates opportunistically presented vouchers as a way to radically reconstruct Ohio's broken educational system.

David Brennan—an Akron business man and co-chair of the Commission on Choice, a state school-reform commission—lobbied Republican Governor George Voinovich (a pro-choice advocate) for a voucher program in the state.<sup>16</sup> Governor Voinovich, former mayor of Cleveland,

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<sup>15</sup> Fowler, 235.

<sup>16</sup>William G. Howell, *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban School* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 31-2.

was troubled over the poor condition of the Cleveland public schools.<sup>17</sup> In response to Brennan's appeal, the governor asked Brennan to oversee the Commission of Educational Choice. The governor desired a statewide educational choice program, but recommended a pilot program as a way of experimentation. The Commission excogitated a plan entitled "The Ohio Scholarship Plan." Their proposal consisted of two plans, each of which advocated educational choice by allowing parents to choose the best school for their children. The first plan permitted public school students K-12 to transfer to private schools with a scholarship if they lived in any of the 12 largest school districts in the state. The second plan limited participants to those entering the first grade, adding one additional grade per year.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, neither plan was adopted by the Ohio Legislature. The plan did, however, prompt robust dialogue and intense debate about the quality of education in Ohio. The result was a pilot program that began in 1995 entitled the "Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program" (CSTP). Brennan hails the program as the "first in the nation to permit parents to choose the best public, private, or parochial school and pay any required tuition with a tax-funded scholarship"<sup>19</sup> An equal amount of scholarships were given to students whom chose to remain in public schools.

What facilitated the passage of voucher legislation is bipartisanship. In 1994 Councilwoman Fannie Lewis (D-Ohio) supported Governor Voinovich and Mr. Brennan in favor of voucher legislation, and as a result Governor Voinovich's proposal was passed in 1995. The Commission on Educational Choice recommended to the governor that voucher programs be established in eight Ohio cities. In 1997, Governor Voinovich proposed legislation to initiate a

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<sup>17</sup> David L. Brennan, *Victory for Kids: The Cleveland School Voucher Case* (Beverly Hills: New Millennium Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



statewide voucher program—his request was denied. The state legislature allowed for only one program in the state.

Ohio is a heavily populated Catholic state. As such, members of the Catholic Church were supportive of and advocates for the inclusion of religious private schools as part of the voucher bill (which was passed as part of a comprehensive budget package), and they openly lobbied for voucher initiatives. The program cost the state 5.5 million. The original program gave 1,500 children vouchers with a value of \$2,250 (by the year 2000 the value of the voucher had increased to \$2,500) to attend private and religious schools.<sup>20</sup> According to Brennan, the mastermind behind the voucher experiment, “The Scholarship Plan was designed to serve families at or near federal poverty level guidelines.”<sup>21</sup> The value of the voucher was set low because Brennan, writes David Zanotti, wanted to “set a standard and try to maximize it.”<sup>22</sup> The goal was to experiment with vouchers without wasting taxpayers’ dollars.

The implementation of the voucher program was not without flaws. Students who attended private schools were eligible to receive vouchers, and there were no income limits on voucher recipients. Most voucher schools were religious and over 80 percent of the voucher students attended those schools in the first three years of the program.<sup>23</sup> In addition, only children entering kindergarten through the third grade were eligible, and voucher grants covered only 90 percent of tuition. In 2000, approximately 3,900 students used vouchers to attend more than sixty-seven schools.<sup>24</sup>

What is more, the program was immediately challenged in the state’s Court of Common Pleas (1996) by the Ohio Federation of Teachers and other anti-voucher groups (e.g., the

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<sup>20</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 31 December 1995, p. 1B

<sup>21</sup> Brennan, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Witte, 74.

<sup>24</sup> Howell et al., 31-2.

American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the ACLU) on the grounds that the program violated church-state separation clauses in either the Ohio or U.S. Constitutions (*Doris Simmons-Harris v. John Goff*, Docket no. 96 CVH 10/721, July 31, 1996). The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the program did not violate the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution, but it did violate the “single subject” rule of the Ohio state constitution—the program could not be part of the state’s budget package. In response to the ruling, the state legislature reenacted the program as part of the legislation dealing only with education.<sup>25</sup>

The legal fray, however, did not cease with this legal quagmire. To make matters worse, in 1999 U.S. District Court Judge Solomon Oliver suspended the voucher program—calling into question its legality—so that the program could undergo more intense legal review. Judge Oliver’s contention was that Cleveland’s voucher program violated the U.S. Constitution. He halted new enrollments, but allowed those students already enrolled in program to continue participating in the program. The Supreme Court intervened and allowed the program to continue as it was (*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 528 U.S. 983, November 5, 1999). On June 27, 2002, the Supreme Court upheld Cleveland’s plan in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, ruling that the program was designed to enable a purely private choice, and that parents, not the government, chose to send their children to religious schools under the program; thus, the program did not involve unconstitutional government support of religion.

### **Research Questions**

I approach this evaluation from the perspective that it is impossible for me to address many of the concerns that would be addressed in a comprehensive evaluation. My aim is to assess the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

effectiveness of the Cleveland voucher program as an alternative policy measure. This study as such is primarily concerned with the following questions as it relates to the Cleveland voucher program.

*Does the program meet the educational needs of the children enrolled?* Vouchers are designed to give parents a choice as it relates to where their children attend school. The original intent of the program was to provide disadvantaged children with the opportunity to attend a private school. This evaluation will assess the program to determine if it is meeting the needs of its target audience.

*Does it attain its goals or objectives?* Many evaluators regard this question as *the* evaluation question. It is important to know whether the program is meeting its goal of giving parents of disadvantaged children the opportunity to send their children to better performing schools. If the program is functioning in the way in which it was designed, then students who previously attended poor performing schools should now be enrolled in successful private schools.

My research focuses on whether the Cleveland voucher program is meeting its declared purpose of permitting parents to choose the best public, private, or parochial school and pay any required tuition with a tax-funded scholarship. This means in part that I address whether students enrolled in the program are performing at higher academic levels than those not enrolled, and whether there has been a noticeable improvement in student test scores.

*How can the program be improved?* This question will assess what changes, if any, need to be made in order to make the program better. The voucher program in Cleveland started as an experiment to test whether vouchers would work. At the conclusion of my research I will offer suggestions as to how the program can be improved.

## Theoretical and Substantive Literature

My primary theoretical resource for this study is the *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.<sup>26</sup> This evaluation examines the results of *systematic investigations* of the Cleveland voucher program. The logic model used in this study focuses primarily on the merit, or effectiveness of the program to achieve its aims, of the voucher program. The merit is studied and analyzed. This model shows how the program purportedly works and how it is suppose to work under certain environmental conditions to solve identified problems.

This model is functional in that it can be used to analyze the program at any time in its life cycle. According to *program* theory, if the right resources are transformed into the right activities for the right people, then these will lead to the results the program was designed to achieve.<sup>27</sup> The logic model provided serves as a tool for describing program theory, i.e., the relationship between program actions and results. The utility of the logic model is that it measures both outcome and implementation measurements to assess areas that need improvement. The elements of the model are resources, activities, outputs, short-term outcome, intermediate outcome, and long-term outcome. The model is constructed in five stages:

Stage 1: Collect the relevant information

Stage 2: Describe the problem the program will solve and its context

Stage 3: Define the elements of the model in a table

Stage 4: Draw the logic model

Stage 5: Verify the model

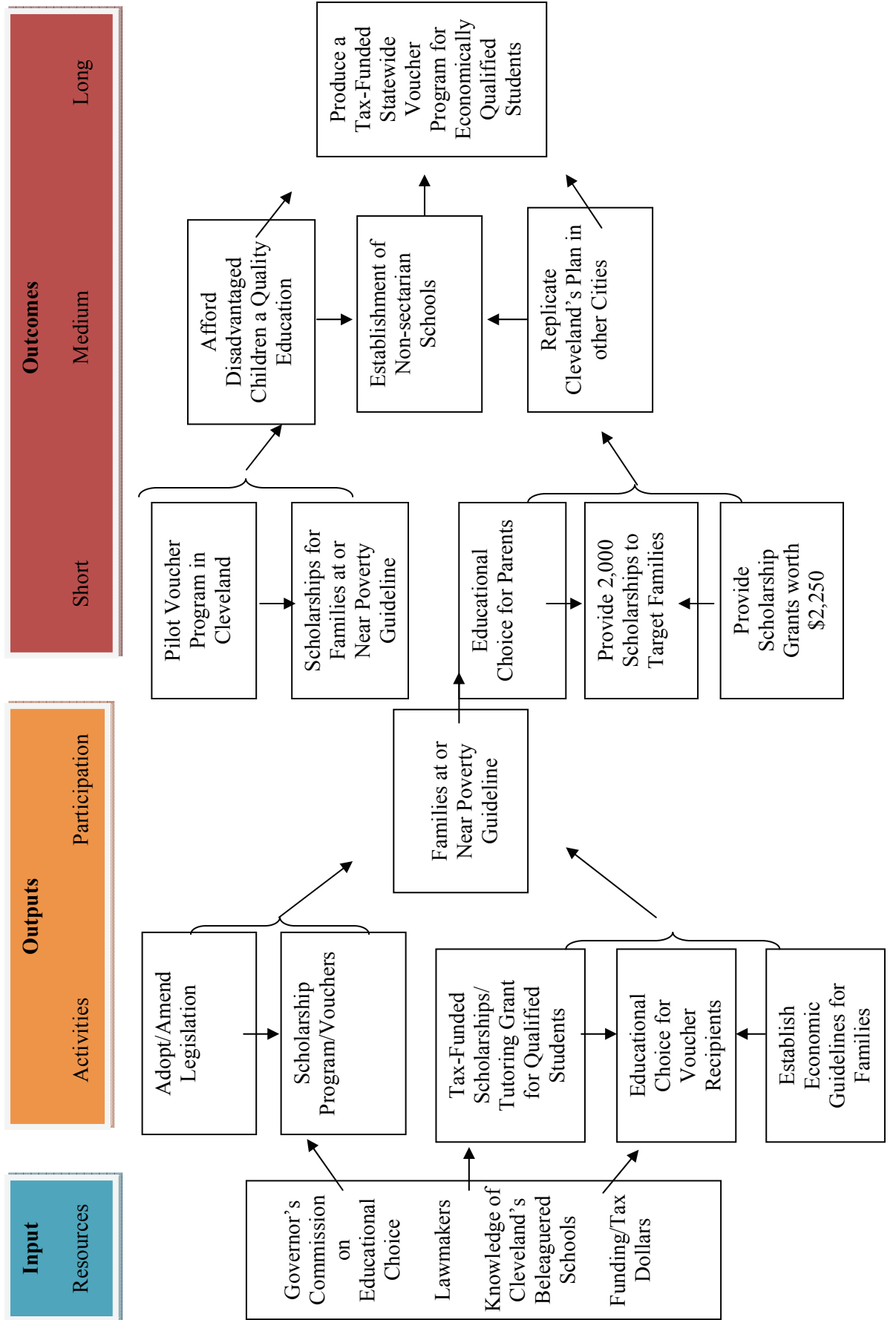
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<sup>26</sup> Joseph S. Wholey, Harry P. Hatry, and Kathryn E. Newcomer, *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

The model proposed by this study is displayed below. This model guides our evaluation of the results of findings from the Cleveland voucher program. The model provides a visual roadmap of the program's logic, evaluation questions, and data resources. The model also presents the goals, strengths, target group, hypotheses, and short- and long-term outcomes. In addition, the model displays the underlying assumptions of the program and highlights the problems that the program is designed to address.

# CLEVELAND'S STATE-FUNDED VOUCHER PROGRAM



My secondary resource for this study was *Small-Scale Evaluation*.<sup>28</sup> This book was useful in that it supplied practical examples of how to conduct a practical small-scale evaluation. I consulted *Small-Scale Evaluation* to assess the efficacy of Cleveland's voucher program. This design was used in conjunction with and within the context of the logic model. This evaluation approach relies on and explains the process of qualitative data collection. Where this book was extremely helpful is in the area of explaining how to analyze existing data/documents and on-going evaluations as a means to assessing the value of a particular program.

To date, there is a paucity of literature on voucher programs and very little empirical research has been done. Despite the fact that the Cleveland voucher program has been the subject of little academic inquiry, it has considerable importance for future voucher legislation. There is very little scholarly literature that has seriously and systematically examined publicly or privately funded voucher programs; and the research that has been done offers conflicting, even contradictory, results. Interestingly enough, Milwaukee's voucher program has received more scholarly attention than Cleveland's.

As regards substantive literature, I started my research by exploring Nathan A. Benefield's published graduate work entitled *Publicly Funded School Voucher Programs: A Policy Analysis*.<sup>29</sup> Benefield's work provides a well researched and well articulated policy analysis of voucher programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee, noting the political, legal, and programmatic constraints facing voucher legislation. His study concludes that vouchers are a beneficial and practical policy alternative.

I consulted Kim Metcalf's (Indiana University Center for Evaluation) multi-year evaluation of the Cleveland voucher program for the Ohio Department of Education. Metcalf and

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<sup>28</sup> Colin Robson, *Small-Scale Evaluation* (California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2000).

<sup>29</sup> See note #7.

his colleagues conducted evaluations of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program from 1998 through 2004. Reading these evaluations and consulting the pertinent data therein provided additional information for my research. This group compared student voucher recipients with public school students and concluded that there was no significant difference in test scores between the two groups in the first year of the program's inception (this claim was later contested by Paul Peterson, et. al., from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government).

John Witte, professor of Political Science and Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has been prolific from a literary point of view in that he has studied, researched and written copiously about the importance of supporting vouchers for poor inner-city children. He admits that voucher programs are a controversial approach to educational reform. Although much of his work highlights the voucher experiment in Milwaukee, he addresses and compares certain aspects of Milwaukee's program with Cleveland's.

Similarly, Witte's colleague, William G. Howell (Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Harvard Professor Paul E. Peterson (Director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance) argue that vouchers may help close the achievement gap found nationwide between African Americans and white students. The authors propose that choice programs will give African American students educational options that were heretofore nonexistent. The logic behind this proposal is that African American students and minority students do not have the economic resources to move to a neighborhood where there is a successful public school. Their options are nil. To that end, Professors Howell and Peterson argue in favor of better-funded voucher programs in central cities with high concentrations of African Americans.



Another resource I consulted is David Brennan's book entitled *Victory for Kids: The Cleveland Voucher Case* (2002). Brennan's work traces the Cleveland voucher program from its intellectual inception in 1992 to its approval by the Supreme Court of the United States on June 27, 2002. Brennan's book tells the story of the hurdles and legal and political restraints that the Cleveland voucher program encountered and overcame. The book provides a well documented account of the evolution of the voucher program and describes how Brennan supported and fought for the program from its inception to its vindication by the nation's highest court. In addition to the aforementioned resources, I consulted numerous articles and e-journal in order to obtain a general idea about vouchers and about the impact of vouchers on students' academic achievement.

### **Research Method**

The first part of my research consisted of reading Benefield's analysis on publicly funded vouchers, which served as both a source of information about the Cleveland voucher program and a resource for identifying additional resources and personalities (Witte, Brennan, Howell and Peterson, etc.) that helped me to conduct an evaluation of the findings from Cleveland's voucher program. I investigated the key players highlighted by Benefield and researched written works by these individuals. The primary sources of information were the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (CEEP),<sup>30</sup> under the leadership of Kim K. Metcalf, and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG),<sup>31</sup> under the direction of Paul E. Peterson. CEEP's multi-year reports provided insight into and analysis of CSTP. All evaluations conducted by

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<sup>30</sup> Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, <http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/project.php?id=37&category=3> (accessed from April to June 2010).

<sup>31</sup> The Program on Education Policy and Governance, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/> (accessed from April to June 2010).