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**State and Local Implementation of the
No Child Left Behind Act:
Volume I—Title I School Choice, Supplemental Educational
Services, and Student Achievement**

A report from the National Longitudinal Study of *No Child Left Behind* (NLS-NCLB)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key aim of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* is to provide new educational options to parents whose children attend Title I schools¹ that are identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring because the schools have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting state standards for two or more years. The first of these options is the opportunity for parents to transfer their children to another school in the district that has not been identified. The second option is the opportunity for parents to enroll their children in supplemental educational services—such as tutoring, remediation, or other academic instruction—that are offered by a state-approved provider and are in addition to instruction provided during the school day. This option is available to low-income families whose children attend a Title I school that is in Year 2 (or a later year) of identified for improvement status.

This report examines the characteristics of students participating in the two options and the related impact on student achievement.

Data from nine large, urban school districts were used for this study. These districts were selected primarily because they had relatively large numbers (but not necessarily large percentages) of students participating in the two choice options. In the 2004–05 school year, the average participation rates across these districts were 0.5 percent for Title I school choice and 12 percent for supplemental educational services, lower than the national averages of 1 and 19 percent, respectively (Stullich, et al., forthcoming).

KEY FINDINGS

- **Participation rates by grade level.** Participation in both the Title I school choice and supplemental educational services options was highest in elementary grades. For supplemental services, 24 to 28 percent of eligible students in grades 2 through 5 participated, while in high school, fewer than 5 percent of eligible students participated. For school choice, average participation rates in grades 2 through 5 were between 0.6 and 1.0 percent, while high school participation rates were between 0.2 and 0.4 percent.
- **Variation in participation rates by student characteristics.** African-American students had the highest rate of participation, compared with other racial or ethnic groups, in Title I supplemental educational services and an above-average participation rate in school choice. Hispanic students had a higher participation rate than white students in supplemental services but a lower participation rate in school choice. Limited English proficiency (LEP) students and students with disabilities had relatively high participation rates in supplemental services and relatively low participation rates in school choice.
- **Prior achievement levels for participating students.** Students enrolled in supplemental educational services had prior achievement levels lower than those for students who were also eligible for these services but who did not enroll. Students who used the Title I school

¹ Title I schools are schools that operate programs funded under Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*, the largest federal program supporting elementary and secondary education. Title I, Part A, includes the two parental choice options that are the subject of this paper. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* is the most recent reauthorization of *ESEA*.

choice option had prior achievement levels similar to those of eligible students who did not transfer. For both options, participating students had prior achievement levels that were lower than those of ineligible students.

- **Characteristics of chosen schools.** Students who used the Title I school choice option moved from schools with below-average achievement levels to schools with above-average achievement levels. Also, students tended to move to more racially balanced schools.
- **Impact of Title I supplemental educational services on student achievement.** On average, across seven districts,² participation in supplemental educational services had a statistically significant, positive effect on students' achievement in reading and math. Students participating for multiple years experienced larger gains.
- **Impact of Title I school choice on student achievement.** In contrast, across six districts,³ no statistically significant effect on achievement, positive or negative, was found for students participating in Title I school choice. However, sample sizes for school choice were much smaller than were those for supplemental services, so there was limited statistical power to detect effects, and caution is warranted in interpreting this result.

Because these findings are based on a small number of school districts that are not nationally representative, they should not be viewed as representative of the effects of school choice and supplemental educational services nationally. However, as one of the first studies of the effects of the Title I parental choice options, the results are important because they are based on data from districts that include a range of underperforming schools and disadvantaged populations that *NCLB* is designed to target.

WHO USES TITLE I SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND SCHOOL CHOICE?

For both options, African-American students had above-average participation rates.

For supplemental services, eligible African-American and Hispanic students had higher participation rates (16.9 percent and 11.6 percent, respectively) than did eligible white students (10.1 percent). Above-average participation rates were also found for students with disabilities (14.6 percent) and LEP students (13.1 percent). Among students eligible for school choice, African-American and white students had above-average participation rates, but participation rates for all measured subgroups were no more than 1.1 percent (see Exhibit S.1).

Students who were eligible for school choice or supplemental educational services were, on average, lower achieving than other students in their districts.

Achievement scores in reading and math for those students who were eligible for school choice or supplemental services were lower than the average scores for the district. In addition, looking specifically at the pool of eligible students (rather than all students in a district), participants in

² Two districts were excluded from the impact analysis for supplemental services because they did not have a sufficient sample of participating students (i.e., fewer than 100 participating students with test score data).

³ Three districts were excluded from the impact analysis for school choice because they did not have a sufficient sample of participating students (i.e., fewer than 100 participating students with test score data).

supplemental services were, on average, lower achieving than students who were eligible but did not participate. Participants in school choice had prior achievement scores that were similar to those who were eligible but did not participate.

Exhibit S.1		
Percentage of Eligible Students Participating in Title I Supplemental Educational Services and School Choice, by Demographic Categories, 2004–05		
Demographic Characteristic	Eligible Students Participating in Supplemental Educational Services	Eligible Students Participating in School Choice
White	10.1%	1.1%
African-American	16.9%	0.9%
Hispanic	11.6%	0.4%
LEP students	13.1%	0.3%
Students with disabilities	14.6%	0.4%

Exhibit reads: For the 2004–05 school year, 10.1 percent of eligible white students participated in supplemental educational services.

Note: Data for one of the nine districts are for 2003–04.

Source: National Longitudinal Study of NCLB.

Students using school choice transferred from schools with below-average achievement levels to schools with above-average achievement levels.

Across the nine districts, average achievement levels in chosen schools were nearly 0.4 of a standard deviation higher (in both reading and math) than average achievement levels in the schools the students left.

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The impact of participating in school choice and supplemental educational services on student achievement was examined by comparing the achievement trajectories of individual students before and after participating with those of nonparticipating students. Achievement effects were also examined for specific subgroup populations, including African-American and Hispanic students and students with disabilities.

Students who participated in supplemental educational services scored better in both reading and math in the first year and even better in the second and subsequent years.

On average across the seven districts examined, supplemental educational services produced positive and statistically significant average effects in both reading and math (see Exhibit S.2). There is evidence that effects may be cumulative: Students participating for multiple years experienced gains twice as large as those of students participating for one year. African-American students, Hispanic students, and students with disabilities all experienced positive achievement effects from participating in supplemental services.

Exhibit S.2
Overall Achievement Gains of Student Participation in Title I Supplemental Educational Services in Seven Districts, Meta-Analysis, 2002–03 Through 2004–05

Effect	Math	Reading
	Coefficients (Confidence Interval)	Coefficients (Confidence Interval)
Overall effect	0.09 ^a (0.03–0.14)	0.08 ^a (0.03–0.13)
First-year effect	0.08 ^a (0.03–0.13)	0.08 ^a (0.03–0.13)
Effect of two or more years	0.17 ^a (0.04–0.30)	0.15 ^a (0.03–0.27)
Effects for African-American students	0.10 ^a (0.03–0.16)	0.12 ^a (0.04–0.20)
Effects for Hispanic students	0.10 ^a (0.02–0.19)	0.09 ^a (0.01–0.16)
Effects for students with disabilities	0.05 (-0.03–0.12)	0.17 ^a (0.06–0.29)

Exhibit reads: Students participating in supplemental educational services in seven districts had, on average, a statistically significant math achievement gain of 0.09 of a standard deviation above the overall district mean.

^a Indicates significance at the 5 percent level.

Source: National Longitudinal Study of NCLB.

Across six districts, using the school choice option does not have a measurable significant effect on student achievement. However, the sample size was small.

Across six districts, participation in Title I school choice produced no statistically significant effect on achievement, overall or after multiple years in the chosen school. Achievement results for particular subgroups using school choice were likewise insignificant, with the notable exception of math achievement gains for students with disabilities, which were negative and statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

Although participation rates were low, participants in Title I school choice and supplemental educational services came from the disadvantaged populations that *NCLB* is intended to target. Participants in supplemental services experienced significant gains in achievement. No such effect was detected for participation in school choice, but sample sizes for the school choice analysis were substantially smaller, reducing the power of the analysis to detect effects and suggesting that caution is warranted in interpreting these results.