

Impact of the Choice is Yours on Student Test Performance

Translating research to practice may be difficult, yet a better understanding of current research is necessary to ensure child welfare workers and other affiliated professionals engage in best practices when working with children and families.

The Minn-Link Discussion Guide is designed to help facilitate thoughtful discussions about the information presented in the research brief in order to inform practice and enhance discussion surrounding meaningful issues.

In this issue, we considered the impact of the Minneapolis area's Choice is Yours (CIY) program by comparing the test performance of students in the program with that of eligible non-participating Minneapolis school students who share similar characteristics as those participating in the program. We also assessed test performance of student first testing in the CIY as compared to those of CIY students testing over multiple years. The overall results showed that First-year CIY students did not score significantly higher than their peers in math or reading. CIY students who took tests in subsequent years had significantly higher math scores than non-CIY students. The same group of later-year students, however, had reading scores that were not significantly different from non-CIY students.

Discussion on Practice Implications

1. In this study, the author alludes to the fact that student mobility could both:
 - Decrease performance through adjustments students have to make in attending a new school and
 - Increase student performance, where academically struggling students re-enroll in schools with more favorable environments.

As a stakeholder with ties to Minnesotan schools, how do you discern these student mobility tradeoffs? Are there other factors tied to mobility that could explain these results? What would you do to minimize negative impacts from mobility in a program like the Choice is Yours?

2. In this study, the author found that returning, later-year Choice is Yours (CIY) students performed better in math than first year CIY students, while prior studies found no difference. Why do you think returning, later-year CIY students perform better on math in this study but not in prior studies?
3. This study found that CIY students testing in reading did not perform significantly better than non-CIY students—results that differ from those in math. The author surmised in the brief that eligible students in Minneapolis may have access to additional supports for reading, not as available to CIY students. What other reasons are there to support the finding that the CIY program students had better math than reading results?

Discussion on Agency- & System-Level Changes

1. The Choice is Yours (CIY) program's aim was to reduce racial and economic segregation, but it ended in 2013. Currently there are no school choice mobility programs in the Twin Cities metro with a similar mission. Are there other existing policies or practices to reduce school segregation? Could a CIY-like program be implemented today? Who do you think would support or oppose such a program?
2. Other school choice programs without an explicit mission to reduce segregation, including charter schools and open enrollment have proliferated in the Twin Cities area since CIY ended. Charter schools in particular have been found to have more segregated enrollments than traditional schools. In what, if in any way, should choice programs be responsible for reducing segregation in schools?
3. A limitation to this study (any many others) is that it focuses solely on test scores when assessing student achievement. There are other individual student and wider societal benefits to education. What are some of the other ways in which educational achievement can be acknowledged, measured and/or evaluated? How might these factors inter-relate with school diversity?