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## EFP Takeaways

Private Schools and Student Achievement

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### *The Study*

Private schools in British Columbia receive a partial voucher (worth 35-50% of the public school operating grant) from the Ministry of Education. These schools must hire certified teachers, cover the provincial curriculum, and participate in low stakes standardized tests.

The authors estimate school-level effectiveness of public and private schools in reading and numeracy, as measured by standardized exams.

### *Findings*

Sixty percent of private school students attend a private school that is more effective in reading than their guaranteed public alternative; 54% attend a school that is more effective in numeracy.

On average, private schools are more effective than public schools in both reading and numeracy. However, school effectiveness varies considerably within both the private and public sectors: many public schools are more effective than the average private school, and many private schools are less effective than the average public school. Less effective private schools tend to be those that are associated with non-Catholic Christian denominations. Moreover, single-sex schooling and higher operating expenditures do not appear to drive private school success.

### *Implications and Recommendations*

This study offers only modest support for the idea that private schools compete for enrollment by providing higher academic quality than students' guaranteed public school alternatives.

Overall, the results present a more positive picture of the effectiveness of private schools than many previous studies. It is not yet known if private schools are poaching highly effective teachers from the public sector, if private schools generate more effective school cultures through specific practices, or if there is something inherent in the market mechanism that engenders greater effort among teachers and administrators.

Understanding how these private schools achieve their success is crucial for policy and an important topic for future research.

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- Summary of: Azimi, E., Friesen, J. & Woodcock, S. (2023). Private Schools and Student Achievement. *Education Finance and Policy*, 18 (4): 623-653.