

Great Lakes Center for Education and Research: Review cautions against claims made regarding test score performance in Milwaukee and Wisconsin

Posted on Tuesday, Apr 25, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: Benjamin Shear, [\(303\) 492-8583](tel:3034928583), benjamin.shear@colorado.edu
Daniel J. Quinn, [\(517\) 203-2940](tel:5172032940), dquinn@greatlakescenter.org

EAST LANSING, Mich. — The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL) released a report in March that attempted to compare test score performance among Wisconsin's traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools participating in voucher programs. It claimed to provide "the clearest possible comparison of student outcomes in each sector in Milwaukee – as well as in Wisconsin." Unfortunately, an academic review released today finds that the report provides insufficient data to support its robust claims.

Benjamin Shear, University of Colorado Boulder, reviewed the report, ***Apples to Apples: The Definitive Look at Test Scores in Milwaukee and Wisconsin***, for the Think Twice think tank review project. Think Twice, a project of the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), is funded in part by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The original report asserted that it provided an "apples to apples" comparison of schools. The report's primary findings, based on standardized test scores from a single year, were that charter schools and private schools receiving voucher funds were more effective than traditional public schools.

Shear, in his review, highlights the problems of using a single year's test scores to compare schools that serve different populations. Additionally, Shear calls attention to the limited nature of the available data, which undermine the causal conclusions of the report.

Despite providing some important descriptive statistics about test score performance in Milwaukee and Wisconsin, Shear finds some troubling inconsistencies regarding the methods and results.

In his conclusion, Shear says: "If policymakers or the public are interested in determining which schools or school choice policies in Wisconsin are most effective, this report cannot provide answers to such questions."

Find the review on the GLC website:

<http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

Find the original report on the web:

<http://www.will-law.org/test-scores-student-achievement-school-performance/>

Think Twice, a project of the National Education Policy Center, provides the public, policymakers and the press with timely, academically sound reviews of selected publications. The project is made possible by funding from the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The review can also be found on the NEPC website:

<http://nepc.colorado.edu>

Benjamin Shear is an assistant professor in the Research and Evaluation Methodology program at the University of Colorado Boulder. His primary research interests address topics in psychometrics and applied statistics, including validity theory, differential item functioning, and the application of diagnostic classification models.