

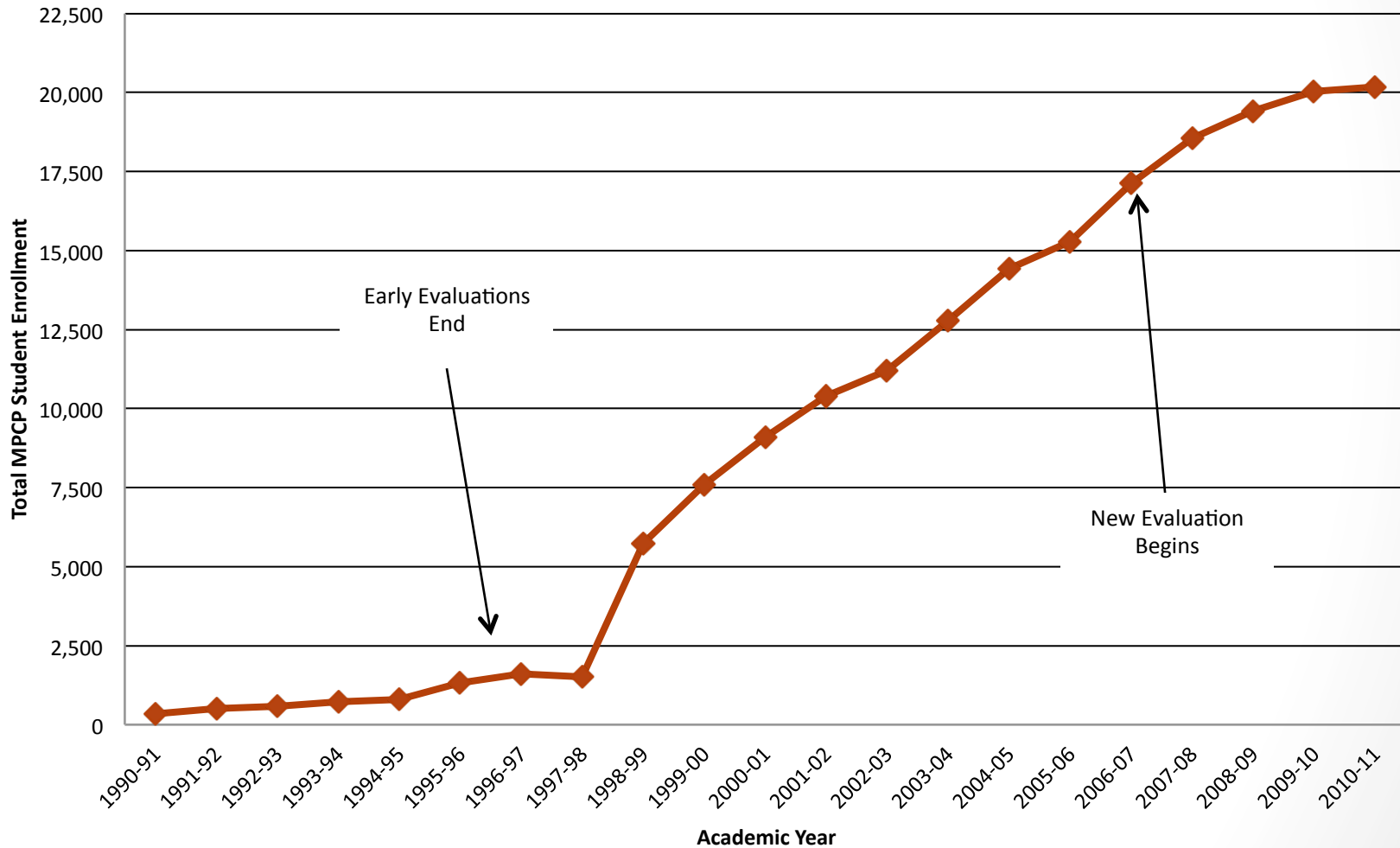
# Vouchers in Milwaukee: What Have We Learned From the Nation's Oldest and Largest Program?

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# Background and History

- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program oldest and largest urban school voucher program
  - Begun as a pilot in 1990—340 students in 7 schools
  - Today about 25,000 students in over 100 schools
  - What have we learned from this program in the 20+ years of its existence?
- Early evaluations
  - Mixed results—Witte; Greene, Peterson, and Du; Rouse
  - Little evidence of cream skimming
  - Early evaluations ended by 1996-97
  - No evaluation until 2006-07
    - Very little monitoring

# MPCP Growth and Evaluations



# New Legislation

- MPCP reauthorized several times between 1996-97 and 2004-05, but none authorized evaluation of the program
- Changed with 2005 Wisconsin Act 125
  - Raised cap on student participation to 22,500
  - Specified eligibility criteria and voucher value
    - 175% of federal poverty line
    - Voucher worth approximately \$6,500—participating schools must accept as full tuition
  - Mandated five-year evaluation of the program

# A New Evaluation

- Legislation mandated comparison of test scores of representative sample of MPCP participants and comparable group of MPS students
  - Both MPCP and MPS required to provide evaluators with those scores
- Permitted wide variety of questions to be addressed
  - Who uses the program? Who leaves the program?
  - Effect of the program on student outcomes
    - Achievement test scores
    - Attainment
  - Effects of accountability policy on participating private schools
    - Unintended, but possible because of...

# More Legislation

- 2009 Wisconsin Act 28—Additional requirements phased in over 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years
  - Requirements for 2009-10 were administrative fee and more rigorous certification for new schools
  - Starting in 2010-11 schools had to test all students in grades 3-8 & 10 in reading and math with WKCE
    - Submit results to DPI for public reporting by school
  - Additional requirements regarding academic standards, teacher certification and instructional hours
- New legislation created complications for evaluation, but facilitated analysis of accountability policy

# Nuts and Bolts of the Evaluation

- Sample selection
  - Random Sample of MPCP Students
  - “Comparable” group of MPS students
    - Randomization not possible
    - Matched MPS sample
      - Census tract—neighborhood effects
      - Baseline test scores
      - Demographic variables

# Nuts and Bolts of the Evaluation

- Data
  - Final matched sample consists of 5,454 students evenly split between MPCP and MPS
    - Surveyed during baseline year
      - Several avenues of inquiry
    - Tested during baseline year (2006-07) and four subsequent school years
  - Additional data collected as well
    - School (and sector) of attendance
    - Demographic characteristics



# What Did We Learn?

- Evaluation provided insight into several dimensions of the operations and effects of the MPCP
  - Characteristics of participants
  - Characteristics of students who leave the program
    - Academic performance of these students upon return to MPS
  - Effects of the program on student outcomes
    - Achievement test scores
    - High school graduation and college enrollment and persistence
  - Role of accountability policy
  - Discuss each in turn
    - Implications for statewide expansion

# Who Uses a Voucher?

Characteristic	MPS Enrollment	MPCP Sample
Black	58%	67%
Hispanic	21%	22%
White	13%	8%
Asian	5%	3%
Female	49%	54%
Free/Reduced Lunch	79%	70%
English Language Learner	7%	9%
Special Needs	18%	8%
Mean Baseline WKCE- Reading (z-score)	0	-0.14
Mean Baseline WKCE- Math (z-score)	0	-0.27
Source: Carlson, Cowen, and Fleming 2013		

# Who Uses a Voucher?

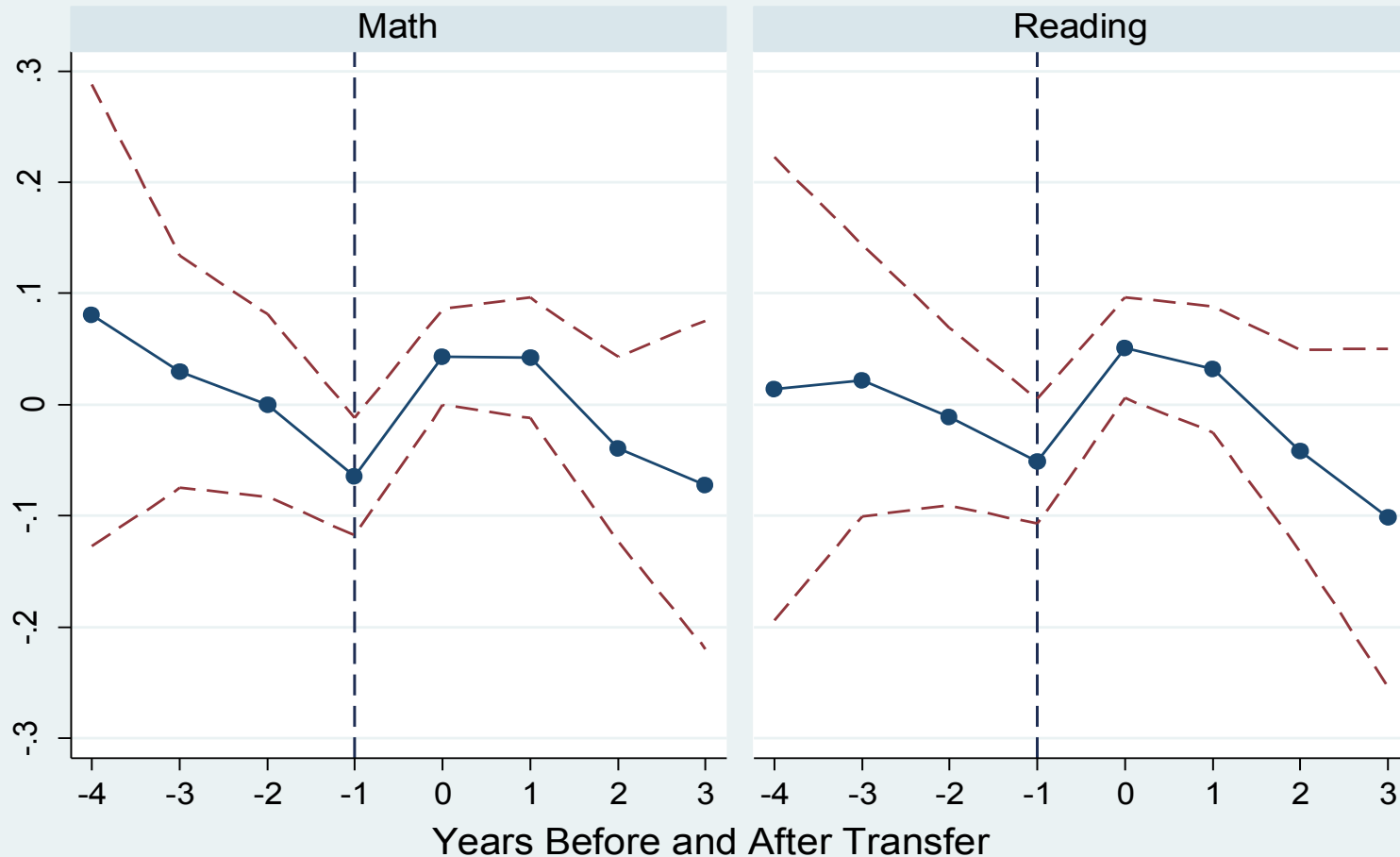
- A couple things to keep in mind when interpreting who uses a voucher
  - Not every MPS student eligible for MPCP
  - Private school record-keeping imperfect for free/reduced lunch eligibility, ELL status, and Special Education status
- Represent best estimates
- Other work from project has shown—relative to matched MPS sample—MPCP parents to be more religious and more educated
  - Lower average income, but might be a function of eligibility criteria

# Who Leaves the MPCP?

Characteristic	MPCP Sample	MPCP Leavers
Black	67%	75%
Hispanic	22%	17%
White	8%	4%
Asian	3%	4%
Female	54%	49%
Free/Reduced Lunch	70%	84%
English Language Learner	9%	5%
Special Needs	8%	11%
Mean Baseline WKCE- Reading (z-score)	-0.14	-0.35
Mean Baseline WKCE- Math (z-score)	-0.27	-0.44
Source: Carlson, Cowen, and Fleming 2013		

# Achievement of Leavers

## Test Scores Before and After Transfer to MPS



Graph shows mean residuals from estimation of equation (3) without MPS indicator.

# Effect of MPCP Participation on Student Achievement

- Statistical analysis of effect of MPCP participation on student achievement
- Present two sets of results—one that does not account for parental characteristics and one that does
  - Smaller sample for results accounting for parental characteristics

Year	Reading-No PC	Math-No PC	Reading- PC	Math- PC
2007-08	0.020 (0.029)	-0.044 (0.027)	0.036 (0.033)	-0.039 (0.032)
2008-09	0.012 (0.030)	-0.038 (0.030)	0.031 (0.035)	-0.061* (0.035)
2009-10	0.050 (0.033)	-0.057 (0.037)	0.062 (0.039)	-0.072* (0.042)
2010-11	0.125*** (0.040)	0.029 (0.039)	0.173*** (0.046)	0.089** (0.046)

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.10$ , two-tailed.

# Effect of MPCP Participation on Student Achievement

- Noticeable difference in results between 2009-10 and 2010-11
  - What could be responsible?
- Accountability policy introduced in 2010-11 school year
  - Testing of all voucher students with WKCE in reading and math
  - Public reporting of scores by school
- Are the differences we observe produced by introduction of accountability policy?
  - Examine in two ways

# Accountability Analysis

- Create dataset of all students who were in the same sector (MPS or MPCP) in 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11
- Perform two analyses
  - Using just MPCP students, compare each student's 2010-11 score to his/her 2009-10 and 2008-09 scores
  - Compare change in MPCP students' scores from 2009-10 to 2010-11 to change in MPS students' scores over those two years
    - MPCP students experienced change in accountability policy
    - Accountability policy was constant for MPS students



# Accountability Analysis Results

- Compared to their 2009-10 scores, MPCP students' 2010-11 scores were significantly higher
  - No difference between 2008-09 and 2009-10 scores
- Change in MPCP students' scores from 2009-10 to 2010-11 was much greater than change in MPS students' scores
  - No differences in the changes from 2008-09 to 2009-10 for students in the two sectors
- Differences we saw between 2009-10 results and 2010-11 results are likely attributable to accountability policy

# Summary of Research

- Some differences between voucher users and overall MPS student body
- Students who leave MPCP and return to MPS more disadvantaged than average voucher user
  - Perform better upon return to MPS
- Little overall difference between MPCP students and matched MPS students in achievement over time
- Differences that emerged in 2010-11 likely attributable to accountability policy

# Relevant Policy Topics

- Scope of expansion
  - Current and future
- Amount and type of accountability
- Student populations in each sector
- Need to have honest conversation on these topics

# Thank You!

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