

Learning Gains or Losses Report
for the Opportunity Scholarship Program
Administered by the
State Education Assistance Authority
December 1, 2018

North Carolina General Statute 115C-562.7(c) requires the State Education Assistance Authority to report annually, beginning in 2018, to the Department of Public Instruction and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following:

- (1) Learning gains or losses of students receiving scholarship grants; and
- (2) Competitive effects on public school performance on standardized tests as a result of the scholarship grant program.

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee is to review the report from the Authority and make ongoing recommendations to the General Assembly as needed regarding improving administration and accountability for nonpublic schools accepting students receiving scholarship grants.

In Section 10A.6(a) of Session Law 2017-57, the General Assembly required that the Authority establish a task force (the “Task Force”) to study the evaluation of students receiving scholarship grants through the Opportunity Scholarship Grant Program. The Task Force’s mandate was to study the most effective, valid and reliable method of evaluating learning gains and losses and comparing the learning gains or losses of those students to public school students with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, including the potential for adoption of a nationally normed common test for students participating in the evaluation. The Authority collaborated with the Department of Administration, Division of Nonpublic Education, and the Department of Public Instruction to complete this study. Task Force members also included representatives from nonpublic schools of varying sizes, an organization representing parental school choice, organizations representing nonpublic schools, two independent research organizations, and the public schools. The Task Force met several times in late 2017 and early 2018, submitting its [report](#) to the General Assembly March 1, 2018. The Task Force findings serve as the basis for this report.

As supported by the Task Force’s report, evaluating and reporting learning gains and losses is not currently achievable. The Authority does not have comparable data given that public schools do not routinely administer nationally standardized tests, private schools administer a variety of nationally standardized tests, and private schools do not administer state tests. Both the public and nonpublic school communities discourage a mandate to administer an additional required test to students that is different from currently administered tests. Finally, costs of tests, third-party test administration, and operationalizing a causal study in an educational environment are significant and will require a recurring appropriation.