



ARE PUBLIC STUDENTS BETTER CITIZENS?

Private schools have demonstrated a greater ability to build and graduate better citizens than their public school counterparts.

FACT: A ONE PERCENT INCREASE IN PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT COULD MEAN A 9.5% TO 21.7% DECREASE IN JUVENILE ARRESTS

The claim that Utah's public schools are essential to ensure good citizenship is untrue. Utah's private schools are doing a better job of instilling principles of good citizenship in their students.

As indicated by federal juvenile arrest data for Utah and its public school enrollment rate (the proportion of school children enrolled in public schools), juvenile delinquency has a lot in common with public school attendance. If public schools do a better job at creating good citizens, we should see a subsequent drop in juvenile arrest rates when the public school enrollment rate goes up. The evidence shows otherwise.

GOOD CITIZEN MYTH

Between September 1993 and September 1995, the public school enrollment rate fell by .59%. According to the "good citizen myth," we would expect to see a rise in the juvenile arrest rate during the subsequent calendar years. Not so, as it fell 11.11%. On the other hand, the public school enrollment rate increased by .25% between academic years 2001 and 2003, during which time the juvenile arrest rate jumped 2.12% in the following calendar years.

As the table below shows, from 1993 through 2004, every time the two-year change in the public school enrollment rate has been negative, the subsequent two-year change in the juvenile arrest rate has also been negative and vice versa.

Statistical models can estimate the effects of moving some of these marginalized public school students into the private school system while holding other things constant such as income (simulating the effects of a private school voucher). Using several different models and estimation procedures, the Sutherland Institute estimates that a decrease of one percentage point in the public school enrollment rate over two years will be associated with a drop in the subsequent juvenile arrest rate between 9.5% and 21.7%.

Of course, the change in crime or arrest rates from troubled youth leaving the public school system should not be constant. We should expect that on the margin the largest effect on crime from students transferring to private schools will be from those marginalized students that leave first; the relationship between crime and public school enrollment should not be linear in the long-term.

School Years	Change in Public School Enrollment Rate	Change in Juvenile Arrest Rate	Calendar Years
1993-1995	-0.59%	-11.11%	1994-1996
1995-1997	0.07%	0.29%	1996-1998
1997-1999	-0.01%	-12.13%	1998-2000
1999-2001	-0.79%	-11.63%	2000-2002
2001-2003	0.25%	2.12%	2002-2004