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**Compendium
of
Abstracts**

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The Divergence of the River: Examining the Effect of Academic “Mismatch” on College Students’ Early Attrition

Yuqin Gong
Illinois Education Research Council

Race-sensitive admission policies in higher education have been under debate. One line of the argument against the policies asserts that the policies hurt the intended beneficiaries by placing them in an academic environment where they can not stand up to the competition and, therefore, artificially turning them into failures --the mismatch argument. Insufficient research has been devoted to testing the mismatch argument. The few studies that have done so have framed the test in the context of the effect of college selectivity, while the proponents of the argument claim that the crucial question in the argument is how wide the gap is between the qualifications of those students and the normal standards of the institutions they are in. This study, through the lens of early attrition and using a large data set collected in Illinois, tested the argument by directly measuring the gap. The results failed to support the argument. Everything else being the same, rather than increasing one’s likelihood of dropping out, being mismatched due to attending a more-competitive institution actually reduces the likelihood of early attrition. This finding is consistent with others’ findings that tested the argument in the context of the effect of college selectivity on graduation likelihood.

University Programs for Teachers Gaining Endorsements in Math and Science to Meet NCLB “Highly Qualified” Status: Preliminary Indications of Outcomes

Kelci Price and Bret Feranchak
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Purpose

The federally mandated “No Child Left Behind Act” (2002) requires that all teachers in “core” subjects must be “highly qualified” in their areas of instruction by the 2005-2006 school year. One implication of this is that many teachers in Illinois may need endorsements in the areas for which they have primary teaching responsibility. However, analyses of the math and science teacher workforce of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has shown that at the beginning of the 2005-2006 academic year, only 5% of elementary teachers were endorsed in math and only 7% were endorsed in science.

To help teachers gain their endorsements in math and science, the Office of Mathematics and Science (OMS) in CPS called on area universities to create or customize endorsement courses for in-service teachers. The programs include middle grades math and science endorsement sequences, K-5 specializations, and high school math endorsement sequences. To support teacher participation in the OMS-approved university programs CPS provides tuition subsidies which cover the majority of tuition.

The purpose of the current project is to gain a greater understanding of how effective the CPS-University Courses program have been in helping teachers gain endorsements in math and/or science. This project addresses several main questions:

- 1) How many CPS teachers have participated in the CPS sponsored courses?
- 2) What does a profile of teacher course-taking look like in terms of how many courses teachers take and how long they continue to take courses for?
- 3) Are teachers who participate in the University-based courses gaining their mathematics and/or science endorsements or degrees?
- 4) Do some programs tend to produce more endorsements than others?
- 5) How well do the University Courses programs meet the identified gaps in educator quality? Are there some areas which are not currently being addressed?

Methodology

The data used in this analysis included information on the course-taking history of each teacher who had been provided a tuition subsidy for an OMS university-based program, as well as information about the teachers’ certificates, degrees, endorsements, and time in CPS. All data is from the period 2001 to spring 2005.

Summary of findings

- Between 2001 and spring 2005 the CPS-University partnership has supported 240 classes at 10 different universities.

- There have been 4100 enrollments in these classes, with increasing enrollments each academic year (from 612 enrollments in 01-02 to 1624 enrollments in 04-05).
- A total of 1248 teachers have participated in these classes.
- 77% of participating teachers took two or more classes. The mean number of classes teachers are taking increased in both the 03-04 and 04-05 academic years.
- 116 participating teachers gained a mathematics endorsement between 2003 and 2005, accounting for 61% of the total mathematics endorsements gained by all CPS teachers during this time.
- 57 participating teachers gained a science endorsement between 2003 and 2005, accounting for 32% of the total science endorsements gained by all CPS teachers during this time.

Implications for Education in Illinois

District policy which seeks to both improve teacher quality and meet NCLB regulations should be driven by two things: 1) data on the current teacher workforce which provides information about teachers' credentialing needs, because this allows the district to both identify existing needs and to prioritize these needs based on the magnitude and difficulty of addressing them, and 2) data on how effective current programs are which have been instituted to improve levels of teacher credentialing. CPS has begun to address both these issues. Firstly, for each of the past several years the Office of Mathematics and Science has developed a snapshot of the credentials of the current teacher workforce in terms of their endorsements and degrees in math and science. This type of data is particularly important in a state system in which the definition of "highly qualified" teachers changes from year to year, as it allows the district to target teacher quality issues within the context of ever-changing interpretations of NCLB standards.

Secondly, the Office of Mathematics and Science has developed a database of information about all participants in the university courses and has undertaken an analysis of the participants to determine whether teachers participating in these programs have gained their endorsements in math and/or science. These two pieces of information allow CPS to determine both the current state of their math and science teacher workforce each year, and whether the programs designed to strengthen the workforce are proving to be effective. This model of data driven decision making provides an excellent example of how formative and summative evaluation can be combined to determine teacher needs, influence policies to create programs which target these needs, and establish the effectiveness of these programs and suggestions for program improvement.

In addition, the relationships that CPS has built with area universities provide an excellent model of how school districts can build collaborative relationships with institutions of higher learning in order to provide endorsement and degree programs for in-service teachers with the goal of improving educator quality.

Comprehensive School Reform in Illinois

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The Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program provides federal funding to public schools, especially high-poverty and low-achieving schools, to implement scientifically based reforms, which will result in increases in student achievement. Each CSR school must address eleven CSR components and track student achievement from the year before receipt of funding through each year of the grant.

This report is the annual evaluation of the CSR schools in the State of Illinois for the year 2004-05. It includes a profile of the CSR schools, analysis of the progress schools made in implementing the eleven CSR components, summary of the academic performance of students in current and past CSR-funded schools, and implications for Illinois.

Methods and Sources

A multi-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques was used. Major sources of profile data were the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Illinois Interactive Report Card (www.iirc.niu.edu). ISBE provided annual audited fiscal reports (FRIS), the State of Illinois database of schools, and Report Cards for the State of Illinois. Additional data included two surveys of all schools; on-site structured interviews, focus groups, and direct observation at twelve schools; and the model providers' annual reports for all schools in the second and third year of the grant. The *ISBE Survey -Coordinator Survey* rendered a response rate of 100%. The *Principal and Teacher Survey* was distributed to a stratified random sample of districts with schools in their first year of CSR funding and to all schools in their second and third years of funding. A total of 327 surveys were completed (100% of Year Three schools, 89.7% of Year Two schools, and 35.6% of Year One schools). The *Principal and Teacher Survey* data were aggregated and averaged by school.

Student performance data included the ISAT reading and mathematics tests administered in grades 3, 5, and 8 and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) administered in grade 11. Achievement data were aggregated at the student-level across all CSR schools to provide statewide CSR achievement rates. Univariate and multivariate methods were used to assess statistical differences among CSR schools and between CSR and non-CSR schools. A matched group of non-CSR schools was created for CSR schools completing their third year of implementation of the grant. Matching criteria included location, size, low-income levels, and ethnicity characteristics. In addition, the current academic performance of students in CSR schools, which completed the grant in 2003 and 2004 were reviewed to determine the sustainability of improved student academic performance.

Profile

A total of 221 schools, in 57 districts, were awarded CSR funding in the State of Illinois: 152 began in 2004-05 and completed Year One; 29 began in 2003-04 and completed Year Two; and 40 began in 2002-03 and completed Year Three. Overall, 6.5% of the public school districts in Illinois and 5.4% of the public schools participated in a CSR program during 2004-05.

The 148,617 students enrolled in CSR schools in 2004-05 accounted for 7.2% of all Illinois public school students. CSR schools were predominantly from large unit districts (28.1%), medium unit districts (19.3%), medium elementary districts (14.0%), or large elementary districts (14.0%). The majority of schools were at the elementary level (56.6%). In the past, few high schools participated in CSR. In 2004-05, the State of Illinois, however, was successful in increasing the number of upper-level and high schools in the CSR program.

In 2004-05, CSR students were predominantly from a minority ethnic group: white – 24.7%; black – 34.0%; Hispanic – 40.0%. Significantly, more CSR students were considered low-income students (71.7%) than Illinois public school students in general (40.0%).

Implementation

Schools were found to have made satisfactory progress and were adhering to their established timelines. The criteria used for assessing implementation were based on a 5-point scale (Cronbach's Alpha Reliability = 0.902). Coordinators for Year Three schools rated the eleven components as being "On Schedule," except for the *parent/community involvement* component. Principals and teachers rated improvements at the schools since the implementation of CSR initiatives. The highest ratings were for "instruction guided by state standards" (91.2% rated as improved), "coordination within grade levels" (90.2%), "improved instructional strategies" (89.2%), "use of innovative strategies" (87.8%), and "use of best practices and research" (87.7%).

Components that were the least apt to be noted as improved were also items that were the slowest to be implemented and the most difficult to implement: "community involvement" and "parent involvement." The most significant barriers to implementing CSR were "lack of time," especially for within and across grade planning. The most often cited facilitating factors were the "support provided by the provider and additional staff," such as literacy coaches and the "teamwork to coordinate instruction across and within grades." Over 95 percent of the coordinators reported a strong professional development component. Approximately 80 percent of the coordinators indicated that they were satisfied with the level of technical assistance and support received for a variety of sources.

Student Achievement

During the baseline year, students in CSR schools scored significantly lower in reading and mathematics than the average of all students in Illinois public schools at the beginning of the program. By the end of the grant cycle, students in Year Three schools had narrowed the achievement gap at each grade level (3rd, 5th, and 8th). The improved academic performance of CSR students was most significant for Black/African American students in third-grade reading, low-income students in fifth-grade mathematics, and eighth-grade Hispanic students in mathematics.

The academic achievement of CSR schools was analyzed to see if any factors, including levels of low income, size of school, locale, model used, school level, or level of implementation impacted student academic performance. The most significant factor in predicting academic achievement was low-income. When the variation due to low-income was held constant, analyses indicated that smaller schools ($n < 500$) and schools in middle-sized cities had the greatest student achievement gains in reading and math.

Year Three schools were matched to non-CSR schools on size, location, level of instruction, percentages of low-income, and Title I demographic characteristics of ethnicity, LEP, and IEP. Students in CSR schools had statistically significantly greater gains in third grade reading, third grade math-

ematics, and fifth grade mathematics. The comparison group did not outperform the CSR cohort at any grade level.

Two cohorts of schools completed the CSR grant cycle prior to 2005. The gain scores for students in the CSR school were statistically larger than the gains for students in non-CSR schools in reading and mathematics in third and fifth grade. Considering the majority of schools in these two CSR cohorts were at the elementary level, the analysis documented the sustainability of the CSR initiatives.

The analyses of the student academic performance data clearly identified the impact CSR schools have had on narrowing the achievement gap, especially for low-income students and students of color. At the same time, it is clear that these significant gains in performance occurred despite the fact that all of the eleven CSR components were not fully implemented.

A closer examination of the open-ended responses for the schools with the greatest performance gains and the schools struggling to improve student academic performance indicates that there may be certain critical characteristics that provide the foundation for comprehensive change. Eight critical factors were identified which schools in CSR initiatives would be well advised to address first.

The *Involvement of Parents and the Community* was the most problematic CSR component. Ways to engage parents earlier in the CSR program and in ways that are more meaningful need to be explored. This involves overcoming major barriers parents encounter, such as no transportation, language barriers, lack of time, and lack of childcare.

The *lack of time* was a recurrent theme throughout the analysis of the implementation of CSR initiatives. Schools for which this was not a major issue were those in which the comprehensive school reform activities were integrated within the normal operation of the school. Further exploration is needed on 1) innovative, new models to maximize the efficiency of how a teacher spends time and 2) ways to ensure CSR is integrated within the planning and governance of the school and not an add-on.

During the three years, CSR schools successfully changed how they taught by focusing on ways to improve learning and by implementing innovative, research-based instructional strategies. Coordinators, principals, and teachers reported many pedagogical improvements to their schools. Even though great strides were made, the three-year time period was insufficient to fully implement CSR across the entire school.

A Close Look at Why Students Succeed or Fail in the Transition to High School and the Implications for Graduation

Elaine Allensworth and John Easton
Consortium on Chicago School Research

There has been increasing national attention to issues of high school dropout, and the inadequacy of programs designed to improve high school completion. In a report issued last year, we showed that the freshman transition is a critical time that sets the stage for the rest of high school. By looking at whether students were on-track to graduate in their freshman year, future dropouts could be identified with precision. This report left many unanswered questions, though, such as why some strong students fail to make a successful transition while some weak students succeed, what factors are associated with success in freshman year courses, and how school factors interact to affect the freshman transition. Using the course records of cohorts of first-time ninth grade students in the Chicago Public Schools this presentation provides a closer examination at what it means to be off-track, how being off-track is related to eventual graduation, and the student- and school-level factors that affect the freshman year transition.

Students who are off-track in their freshman year are generally struggling across all their courses, even those they pass. It is very rare for a student to do well in some classes but fail in others. Beyond just failures, course grades overall provide extra information about students' likelihood of eventually graduating. Over 90% of students with a "B" average their freshman year graduate, as do students with a "C" average and no course failures. Students unlikely to graduate have a "D" average or below, or have failed at least one course. Boys are more likely to have poor course performance than girls, even when we control for incoming achievement. African-American and Latino students are more likely to have poor grades than white and Asian students even after controlling for elementary achievement and background characteristics such as mobility in elementary school, economic status and age at entering high school.

One would expect that students' success in their courses would be affected by traits and behaviors of students (e.g., academic performance in elementary school, absenteeism, and non-cognitive skills such as study behaviors), and by the supports and instruction they experience in school. The previous report showed that academic achievement in elementary school is strongly related to the likelihood of a successful transition to high school, but that there were large discrepancies--over one-fifth of students with very high elementary test scores failed to be on-track by the end of their freshman year, while over half of those with very low test scores were on-track. Absenteeism turns out to be much more strongly related to course failure than incoming test scores. Absenteeism is particularly related to course failure, although it also affects non-F grades. Even students with strong achievement in elementary school are likely to frequently miss classes in a number of schools, especially in the second semester. In addition, student behaviors, such as time spent on homework and class preparation also affect success freshman year. However, absenteeism and study behaviors do not explain gender or racial differences in course grades.

There are also large differences across sending elementary schools and receiving high schools in on-track rates among freshmen. Differences between elementary schools result primarily through the degree to which their students obtain the academic skills necessary for success in high school. At the high school level, there still remain large differences once we control for the skills that students bring with them to school. Students do better in schools in which more students report supportive

relationships with teachers, where they engage in challenging class assignments, and where students report that their friends work hard in school. While these characteristics are more frequently found in magnet schools, students in non-magnet schools with better climate and instruction perform better in their freshman classes and are more likely to graduate than students in schools that attract similar students but do not foster the same academic climate and engaging instruction.

Postsecondary Employment of Chicago Public Schools 2004 Graduates

Gudelia Lopez (*presenting for Ilona Vincent*)
Chicago Public Schools

The Department of Postsecondary Education (PSE) at the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) entered into a data sharing agreement with the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) to obtain the Unemployment Insurance wage records for high school graduates. With the tracking of college bound students already underway, and the PSE Department's commitment to helping students successfully transition into life after high school (whether it is higher education or employment), the employment data collected through the agreement with IDES provides an important piece of information in understanding students' postsecondary outcomes.

In 2004 approximately 18,224 students graduated from the Chicago Public Schools. However, since the employment data was requested for only those students who had a valid social security number in the student information system, 15,749 of 2004 graduates comprise the population sample. Forty-four percent of the students were actively participating in the labor market by the fall after high school graduation, and 66 percent by the fall of the following year with males employed at a slightly higher rate than females. This is significantly lower than the national average for 2004 high school graduates not enrolled in college of 77 percent, implying a much higher unemployment rate for CPS high school graduates. According to our analysis, students do not work continuously. Only 47 percent of students who did not enroll in college worked for 4 continuous quarters of the year after high school graduation. On average, students worked just under 3 quarters of the year. The median annual wage for students not enrolled in college and working continuously is approximately \$11,398. If we were to assume that this amount represents fulltime earning, it translates to approximately \$5.90 per hour, which is comparable to the Illinois minimum wage which was \$5.50 in 2004 and \$6.50 in 2005.

There are only slight differences in employment rates between genders, with young men participating in the labor force at a slightly higher rate than young women. There are however distinct differences in annual earnings. The median annual earnings for continuously working women is 25 percent lower than for men. Given that there are no gender differences in the average quarters, the earnings difference is either a factor of fewer hours worked, or more likely, of lower wages earned by women. These statistics are also in line with national findings.

Finally, our analysis shows that Latino students have the highest employment rates among all the racial/ethnic groups. They also have the highest percentage of students working continuous quarters and, what could be a factor of the latter, the highest median annual earnings.

Pipelines and Pools: Meeting the Demand for Early Childhood Teachers in Illinois?

Brenda Klostermann and Brad White
Illinois Education Research Council

In 2004, the Illinois Education Research Council received a grant from the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University to examine whether the supply of qualified early childhood teachers would be adequate to meet a potentially growing demand if the state was able to increase access to preschool. Since that time, with leadership from the Governor's Office, Illinois's plan for *Preschool For All* plan has crystallized. By 2006, 75,000 at-risk 3- and 4-year olds were being served by a program that has added 19,000 children over the past three years. The FY 2007 budget includes the first \$45 million of a \$135 million three-year plan to add another 32,000 children to the state Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) program under *Preschool For All*. The plan is to then reach all interested 3- and 4-year olds with additional funding in years four and five (FY 2010-2011). Through this expansion, community-based childcare programs, Head Start sites, and schools are able to access new funds to deliver high-quality early childhood programs if they employ Type 04 certified teachers (who by definition also hold BA degrees).

Illinois is potentially well placed to meet an immediate increase in demand for qualified early childhood teachers because it has had a specific state certification (Type 04, formerly Type 02) for instruction of birth to Grade 3 for many years. The usual place to look for a supply of teachers is to the new-certificant pipeline, and we begin our analysis there. But because of Illinois' history of certifying early childhood teachers, we also wanted to know whether there was a Reserve Pool of teachers who would also be available to fill the growing number of teaching jobs. There is a general sense among early childhood professionals that teachers prefer a school environment rather than a community center setting, so we decided to ask qualified individuals directly whether they are willing to work in early childhood centers, and what incentives, if any, might be needed to make this sector of the teacher labor market more attractive to them. We surveyed 4,000 individuals who held Illinois Type 04 teacher certification, but were not teaching in the Illinois public schools in 2002-2003, the year we began to plan the study. With the results from these two supply sources in hand—the pipeline of new teachers and the pool of previously certified teachers—we were able to assess the extent to which Illinois might be able to meet the increased demand for Type 04 teachers as *Preschool For All* is implemented.

The New-Teacher Pipeline is Robust but Leaky.

Using data from the national Integrated Postsecondary Data Analysis System, or IPEDS, we found that over the eight-year period from 1998-2005, Illinois colleges awarded an annual average of 467 bachelor's and about 153 master's degrees in early childhood education, for a yearly average of 620 awards. While there are some fluctuations from year to year, the overall trend was quite stable.

Interestingly, we found more than 2,600 students per year are reported to be enrolled in early childhood programs in Illinois' institutions of higher education, with more than half of them (about 1,400) in Chicago institutions. We learned, however, that some higher education institutions include in their program statistics students who are enrolled at their institutions, and have expressed an interest in a particular academic program (in this case early childhood teacher preparation programs), but may not have actually been admitted to such a program. Admission to teacher preparation programs across the state has become more stringent, and now includes a requirement to pass the state's Basic Skills test. With this knowledge in mind, we concluded that while the pipeline from enrollment to program completion appears to be quite leaky, much of the leakage may actually be occurring between "interest" and program enrollment. We encourage institutions of higher education to look carefully at what barriers may be preventing students

from making progress from “interest” status to enrollment to graduation. Some may be appropriate while others need to be removed.

We found that data on early childhood programs are not congruent with data on the numbers of Type 04 teachers newly certified in Illinois each year. The total number of new Type 04 certificants in Illinois has been higher—about 765 annually, and increased to almost 900 in 2004, and to over 1,000 in 2005. If this trend continues, it bodes well for meeting the increasing need for these teachers. It also suggests that additional research is needed to identify where these new certificants are coming from.

There is a Ready and Potentially Willing Reserve Pool of Qualified Teachers.

We identified a potential reserve pool of 5,400 qualified teachers who were not in the Illinois public schools in 2002-2003. We worked hard to obtain a strong response rate, which finally was a representative 46% of the 4,000 individuals who were randomly selected to complete the survey. After we removed from the analysis individuals who told us they were retired (14%) or already working in an early childhood center (10%), we found that 83% of the remaining Type 04 certified teachers (3,402) would consider working in an early childhood center setting under certain conditions. Overwhelmingly, when asked to identify their top three incentives, salaries trumped everything else. While this does not come as new news, our study provides compelling evidence that it is salaries that make it hard to recruit certified teachers to some early childhood centers, not the setting. It appears that salaries need to be quite similar to those available to teachers in schools locally. We also found that most of the Reserve Pool not only had prior experience in education (with almost half having had experience in an early childhood center) but that, contrary to popular belief, they have not left the field of education or even the early education arena. And also contrary to popular belief, Illinois public schools provide a fertile ground for recruiting early childhood teachers to work in the anticipated expansion sites.

The Supply of Certified Early Childhood Teachers in Illinois Can Meet Increasing Demand if Salaries Become Competitive with Other Teaching Opportunities.

We used three service-level models—32,000 additional children in years one to three, 23,000 additional children in years four and five to reach additional interested 3- and 4-year olds in Illinois, and the impact of adding Head Start programs to the analysis—to assess the extent to which the pipeline and pool of Type 04 certified teachers can meet projected increases in demand due to program expansion.

We found that through a combination of recruitment from the currently qualified Reserve Pool of individuals, most of whom expressed a willingness to consider working in an early childhood center environment if salaries were similar to other teaching opportunities, and the current production pipeline of new certificants, Illinois will be able to meet the demand for additional early childhood teachers if *Preschool For All* adds no more than about 10,000 3- and 4-year olds per year.

- Reserve Pool members are willing to work in early childhood centers and provide a ready source of qualified teachers under certain conditions;
- Illinois early childhood centers need to offer certified teachers salaries that recognize their professional training and education;
- ISBE’s certificant database may provide a source of recruitment of Type 04 certificants; and
- Chicago will be more reliant on the pipeline than other regions. Chicago institutions of higher education that offer early childhood teacher preparation programs need to examine who is in the pipeline and why more of their students are not progressing from “interest” to program enrollee to graduate.

Implementation and Outcomes: A Study of Small High Schools in Chicago

Susan Sporte, W. David Stevens and Marisa de la Torre
Consortium on Chicago School Research

Purpose of Research

This research examines the implementation and impact of the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative (CHSRI), a collaborative reform effort of the Gates Foundation, local Chicago funders, and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to open approximately three dozen small high schools across the city. Specifically it asks: what are the challenges of implementing a comprehensive small schools initiative? And what impact do these efforts have on school improvement, and ultimately students? These questions have become urgent in recent years as public and private funders have invested unprecedented sums into small schools initiatives and many districts have made these initiatives a cornerstone of their improvement strategies. Such efforts have been spurred by a growing body of evidence that suggests high schools in the United States are in need of major reform – or, as some have put it, in need of being re-invented (Harvey & Housman, 2004). Current research often highlights that high schools are not preparing students for college, work, or life (American Diploma Project, 2004). The problem is especially severe in large urban high schools, which disproportionately serve students of low socioeconomic status and students of color. In Chicago’s public schools, for example, where more than 85% of students come from low-income backgrounds and 91% are students of color, only 29% of all 9th graders were reading at grade level in 2000 and little more than half of this cohort (55%) graduated from high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2001; Allensworth, 2005).

While there is ample research that high schools to varying degrees require reinvention, research on the viability of small schools initiatives to address these challenges is far more limited. Such a strategy rests on a research base that suggests new schools, schools that are small in their overall size, and schools with new decision-making authority over basic operations each may contribute to demonstrable improvements in student school performance (e.g., Cotton, 2001). Little is known, however, about districts’ attempts to use small schools initiatives—efforts that combine school creation, small size, and autonomy in an overall strategy—to produce such results. In particular, what policies and practices support these reform activities? How do these help or hinder school improvement and student learning? And what can research on these initiatives teach districts and practitioners about how to reinvent high schools? This paper takes up these questions by providing a multi-angled view of Chicago’s small school reform initiative and the outcomes it is producing.

Methodology

This study reports findings from a comprehensive 3 year study of CHSRI schools that draws on both qualitative and quantitative data. In May of 2003 and May of 2004 we visited all existing CHSRI schools (5 and 11 respectively for each year), and conducted principal interviews and teacher and student focus groups. During the 2004-2005 school year we conducted more intensive qualitative research on instructional development activities in 7 schools. This fieldwork included interviews with principals and teachers as well as observations of teacher team meetings. In addition, we interviewed CHSRI staff members and Area Instructional Officers from CPS and attended CHSRI’s monthly principal meetings. Over all phases of our fieldwork we conducted a total of 81 interviews,

31 focus groups and observed 47 staff meetings. And finally we collected and reviewed several written documents related to the initiative and to instructional development activities.

For our quantitative analysis, we relied on two data sources. First we used survey data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research's biannual district-wide survey administered in May of 2003 and May of 2005 to teachers and students. Teacher surveys included items about school climate, school improvement activities and instruction. Student surveys asked questions regarding instruction, academic expectations, and student context issues. We also used CPS student administrative data detailing dropout rates, attendance, on-track to graduate (see Allensworth 2005 for a description of this indicator) and test scores for students enrolled in CPS during the 02-03 through 04-05 academic years. We used Hierarchical Methods to adjust for individual and school characteristics so that we could compare the contexts and outcomes of CHSRI schools with the contexts and outcomes of other high schools in Chicago.

Findings

Situating small school reform within the structure of a school district such as Chicago creates some unique implementation challenges. Our interviews indicate that a series of bureaucratic hurdles, a lack of flexibility on the part of CPS, staffing constraints and budget limitations have made it difficult for the schools to implement their proposed improvements.

In spite of implementation challenges, the small schools have created more personalized and supportive environments for both students and teachers. Teacher professional communities in CHSRI schools are marked by a sense of collective responsibility, collegiality, and a more personalized knowledge of students. Students report personal and academic support from teachers and a stronger peer climate.

However, our work indicates that it has been difficult for schools to translate these supportive contexts into instructional improvement activities or instructional change. In addition, accountability pressures have led schools to define their instructional goals in terms of test scores rather than focusing on teaching activities or student learning.

Student outcomes seem to mirror these findings. The more supportive context may be linked to the finding that students at CHSRI schools are absent fewer days and are less likely to drop out than similar non-CHSRI students. Similarly, the absence of deep instructional change may be related to the finding that there was no CHSRI effect on achievement.

Implications

The CHSRI small schools initiative gives some reason for hope. It seems possible to create small high schools on a large scale with productive contexts that facilitate student engagement and connection, as well as strong teacher professional communities. However, our work cautions that structural changes and personalized context are not enough to realize the opportunities inherent in small high schools. Strong instructional leadership at the school level seems to be an important and necessary component of reform if small high schools are going to improve teaching and learning. In addition, the success of small high school initiatives may rest on the ability of districts to develop structures and policies that take into account and accommodate the unique needs of these schools.

Dual Credit Policy: Lessons From the Perspective of Admissions Officers in 4-Year Colleges and Universities in Illinois

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Study Purpose

Dual credit provides high school students with a jumpstart on college-level course work while simultaneously earning credit towards their high school and college transcripts. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) reported student dual credit participation in Illinois at 36,179 students for the 2004 fiscal year, up 51% from 2000. Recent rapid growth in dual credit participation has left some educational institutions struggling to put institutional policies and procedures in place to accommodate an increasing demand from students and parents. The process of transferring these credits 4-year degree-granting institutions can be particularly uncertain, as little research examines them as participants in or recipients of dual credit trends. To address this gap, this study examines current policies and practices from the perspective of admissions officers in Illinois' 4-year institutions.

Methods

The study sample included 40 (of the 68 total) 4-year colleges and universities in Illinois with enrollments of over 500 students. To best highlight the experiences that large groups of Illinois' students encounter, a purposive sample of all 12 public institutions was chosen, followed by a stratified random sample of 28 private institutions based on size (small = 500-1999 students; medium = 2000-7999 students; and large = 8000+ students) and location (upstate or downstate).

Two data collection methods were used. First, 30-minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Deans or Directors of Admissions or Enrollment Offices. The interviews covered topics such as: the history of dual credit at the institution, admissions decisions, acceptance of dual credit, denial of dual credit, detail of the policy, and current trends. Once the data were collected, each tape was transcribed and coded. The second data collection method was to search each participating institution's website via key word searches on all of the following terms: dual credit, dual enrollment, transfer credit, advanced standing, college credit earned in high school, and previous college work. These terms were taken directly from the interviews. Each mention of the terms on institution websites were flagged, and related text recorded and coded.

Of the private institution sample, 19 (67.9%) participated in this study, which accounts for 33.9% of all the state's private institutions enrolling 500 or more students. While 100% of Illinois public institutions were contacted, 10 (83%) chose to participate in the study. The majority of respondents (72.1%) were the original contacts who were in leadership positions in their Admissions or Enrollment office. In a few cases, depending on the institution's structure for dual credit practices, referrals were made to other individuals or offices with more exposure to dual credit issues. These referrals were to Registrars (13.8%), Directors of Academic Advising (10.4%) and an Associate Director of Processing & Evaluation (3.4%).

Selected Study Findings

Policy Decisions Regarding the Acceptance of Dual Credit. Looking at current institutional policies, 25 of the 29 (86%) 4-year higher education institutions studied accepted dual credit. Of the

remaining 4, a single public institution was in the process of changing its policy to accept dual credit, and 3 private institutions did not accept dual credit and indicated that they do not have current plans to change their policy to accept dual credit.

Of the 25 institutions that accepted dual credit, 100% required that (a) students earned a minimum grade in the course, and (b) the course was taken at a regionally accredited institution. Other common criteria included college level materials were used in the course (72%), the quality of the course was similar to the quality of the same course at the 4-year level (60%), and students met all prerequisites for the course (48%). No preference was found for credits earned at in-state rather than out-of-state institutions or for credits earned by incoming freshmen versus transfer students. Liberal arts and sciences and college prep courses, however, were more readily accepted than career, technical and vocational courses by the majority of institutions.

The most common reasons for rejecting students' dual credit requests were that the grade received in the course was too low (40.0%), the material in the course was not college level (28.0%), and the sponsoring institution or community college was not accredited (28.6%).

Methods of Informing Others. There were no cases in which written policies directly referenced or used the term "dual credit." The current most common strategy for addressing dual credit, employed by over half of the institutions, was to default to the institution's transfer credit policy. Even when policies were developed under other titles (e.g. advanced standing, college credit earned in high school, previous college work), the parallels to transfer policy were clear. One quarter of the institutions had no written dual credit policy of any kind, but two of those institutions were working on a written policy to be implemented by Fall 2005.

Word-of-mouth was the most common way for groups such as prospective students, parents, and school counselors to be informed about dual credit policies. Over half (51.7%) of the institutions relayed information about dual credit over the phone or in person, and a smaller percentage of participants used course catalogs (39.3%) and websites (25.9%).

IMPLICATIONS FOR ILLINOIS EDUCATION

Results suggested that the novelty and recent growth of dual credit programs in Illinois may have influenced the current ambiguous state of policy and practice. Beyond the established, widespread criteria of ensuring students had earned a minimum grade in a course from an accredited institution, mechanisms are needed to alleviate confusion and insure course content is college level, course quality is comparable to college-level instruction, and course prerequisites are met. Although word-of-mouth, the most common way of communicating dual credit information to stakeholders, is important, other forms of communication are needed. Illinois' institutions should include clear and unambiguous information about dual credit in student handbooks, course catalogs, and college websites. Finally, the strategy of using transfer credit policies to handle dual credit raises the question of students with dual credit are advantaged or disadvantaged by this approach. Whether students understand and identify with this approach remains to be seen.

Following the Illinois High School Class of 2002: Three Years Into College

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Illinois Education Research Council

In this research presentation we will address two critical state-level policy issues:

- What is the picture for college access and success in Illinois three years after initial enrollment, and
- What role do the community colleges play as an avenue to postsecondary success.

Even as access to postsecondary education opportunity remains an important policy issue, what happens to students after they enroll is of great importance as well. Illinois policy makers are not alone in their concern about graduation rates, but the only state-level information that has until now been available to them is institutional-level results. A second related policy issue is that Illinois offers access to higher education through a large two-year sector (40% of in-state freshmen), a small public four-year sector, and is a large net-exporter of college freshmen. Does the heavy reliance on entry through the two-year portal impact otherwise similar students' persistence? Are there regional differences? Does this pattern of participation adversely affect the outcomes for particular racial/ethnic or socio-economic groups of students?

We are tracking college participation, persistence and completion of all 113,660 of Illinois' public high school graduates of class of 2002. Because this cohort all took the ACT as part of state testing as juniors (in 2001), we also have available their ACT scores and other background information. In this presentation, we report on the participation, persistence and attrition patterns of the Class of 2002 through the first three years of college nationwide. The stunningly different picture of US higher education that is emerging when looking at postsecondary system persistence, as compared to looking at institutional persistence, is helping state policy makers distinguish between real and false concerns that need state attention. The data also make it possible to examine the impact of two-year institution attendance vs. four-year attendance, especially when we control for student college readiness.

Highlights of Results

We found 57% of the Class of 2002 who started college in 2002-2003 was still at their first institution and over 20% had transferred to other institutions by the third year. Not surprisingly, we found a strong relationship between students' college readiness and their persistence. But we also found differences in persistence among different types of institutions.

Of those who started college at an Illinois public two-year institution, 39% remain enrolled at their first institution, and another 19% transferred to a four-year institution and 6% transferred to a different two-year institution, leaving about one third (36%) not enrolled anywhere. Among those who are not still enrolled anywhere, only a very small proportion have earned some credential (2% of total two-year starters or 6% of these stop-outs). Even our college-ready students who started at two-year institutions have much lower persistence rates than similar students who started at a four-year institution.

The picture at four-year institutions is much more encouraging. By the third year, about 70% of those who started college at a four-year institution remain at their first institution and about 20% have transferred to other institutions, leaving only 10% who have stopped being enrolled in the higher education system. This evidence reveals the different pictures of outcomes drawn from system persistence rates versus institutional persistence rates. The results also indicate the extent of reverse transfer—transfer from four-year institutions to two-year institutions. One in ten of the state's four-year starters were enrolled in the two-year sector two years later, the same proportion as those who changed to another four-year institution.

The comparison shows that more- and most-ready students who started college in two-year institutions are 9 and 11 percentage points respectively more likely to stop enrollment by the third year of initial enrollment, compared to similarly prepared students attending non/less competitive four-year institutions. Even after taking into account of those who have earned any sort of degree or certificate, two-year starters are still six and eight percentage points more likely to stop enrollment than non/less competitive four-year institution starters. We will also show not only that equally ready students starting at a four-year institution are more likely still to be enrolled, but that as they move up the institutional competitiveness ladder, their persistence increases, not decreases.

Conclusion

The new data set used in this study reveals a brighter picture for higher education than we see when we only look at institutional-level data. About 90% of those who started at four-year institutions remain enrolled in the third year, either at their first institution or at other institutions. The study emphasizes the importance of tracking students through the whole higher education system to get a more complete understanding of higher education outcomes.

Our results also add evidence that students attending two-year institutions are more likely to disengage from the higher education system than students with comparable characteristics but attending four-year institutions.

Illinois Principals' Attitudes Toward Practicum Placements and Portfolios

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Purpose

This research was designed to answer two questions that are particularly vexing for teacher educators. The first concerns principals' use of candidate portfolios in the hiring process. Currently, most colleges that prepare teachers require each candidate to prepare a comprehensive portfolio that includes artifacts that demonstrate the candidate's competence in meeting a variety of state and national standards. The primary use of such portfolios is to meet the assessment and accreditation needs of the college; however candidates almost universally present their portfolios to potential employers. Feedback from our graduates has indicated that they experienced a wide range of acceptance/use when they interviewed for positions. Much of the literature on the use of portfolios has been limited to suggestions on how to prepare and use portfolios for the assessment of candidates' skills. In learning how principals use candidates' portfolios, expectations of teacher educators might be adjusted to ensure that we can use the portfolios for assessment and that the portfolios would be useful for our graduates.

The second issue pertains to the clinical placements of education candidates. It is almost universally accepted both in the literature and in practice in teacher preparation that clinical experiences are extraordinarily important. However, in recent years a number of factors have begun to influence the willingness of school districts to accept students, particularly student teachers, from colleges. These factors include parental demands that their children do not have student teachers, pressures from the state and federal government for increased test scores, increasing numbers of inexperienced faculty roles due to retirements of the more experienced teachers, and rules negotiated by teachers' unions. This topic has generated significant discussion both in the higher education community and at the district level. Since principals are the primary decision-makers regarding the placement of pre-service teachers in their schools, learning the relative importance of factors that they consider when making placements is critical knowledge for institutions of higher education.

Methodology

A list of all current principals ($N = 4053$) in the public schools in Illinois was obtained from the Illinois State Board of Education. Then, using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure appropriate representation from each of the 101 counties in Illinois, 1000 principals were selected to receive the survey. Each principal was mailed a survey (see attached) and a postage-paid return envelope. Results were aggregated and viewed as a whole and additionally sorted both by school type (elementary, middle, and high) and area (urban, suburban, and rural). Data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings

Preliminary results from the survey section of portfolios indicate that 51% of schools responding preferred the portfolios submitted on paper and 41% did not have a preference. Only a little over 7% of schools preferred the portfolio in an electronic format. The items most important for inclusion in the portfolio were letters of recommendation and examples of: classroom management strategies, various instructional strategies, assessment, and technology skills, all means indicating that these

items were important or very important. Over half of the school districts responding (51%) indicated that the importance of the portfolio in the hiring process was not at all important or only somewhat important, with only 7.5% indicating that it was very important. Qualitative comments reference the greater importance of personal communication skills and relational abilities in the interview process, with one principal stating that “Some of the worse teachers I have ever evaluated looked wonderful on paper.”

Preliminary results from the survey section on student teacher placement preferences indicated that the most important factors in placing student teachers were: willingness and experience of the cooperating teacher, the certification area of the student teacher, and previous relations with the college/university, all means indicating that these areas were important or very important. Qualitative comments indicated a possible geographical disparity in student teaching placements, with comments indicating either a desire for placements – some districts stating that they never receive requests – or a desire for fewer placements. Follow-up analyses will examine whether there are patterns in placement requests for school level, size, or type.

Analyses by school level (elementary, middle, high school, or other), school size, and school type (rural, suburban, urban) were conducted for the portfolio section and the student teaching placement section of the survey. For the portfolio section of the survey, a significant difference was found among school levels in the importance placed on examples of classroom management strategies, with the high schools ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.90$) reporting this inclusion as less important than the elementary schools ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.89$). When categorized by school size, the only significant difference found was that schools of 101-250 spent significantly more time ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.93$) reviewing portfolio than schools of 251-400 ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.97$). Several differences were found in the responses of urban, suburban, and rural schools. Most notably, time spent reviewing the portfolio and the importance of examples of classroom management strategies in the portfolio had significant differences among the types of schools.

Analyses were also conducted for the student teaching placement section of the survey, with the following significant differences found. When sorted by school level, differences were found between middle school responses ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.79$) and responses of schools self-identified as other/special ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.00$) in considering incentives, such as tuition waivers, when placing student teachers. School size also affected whether incentives influenced student teacher placement decisions, with schools of 101-250 placing a higher value on these incentives ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.00$) than schools of 1000+ ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.84$). As with the portfolio section of the survey, there were several significant differences found among rural, suburban, and urban schools, with the key differences between suburban and rural districts: the number of requests from other colleges/universities or the same college/university, collective bargaining agreements, and incentives offered by the college/university in placing student teachers.

Implications

The results of this study provide valuable information for teacher educators in Illinois. By learning how portfolios are used by principals, teacher educators can re-examine their current portfolio requirements and tailor them to meet better the needs of employers. Knowing differences in perceptions by school level, size, and type can affect how candidates prepare their portfolios and use them during the application process. Second, by learning the factors that influence principals’ decisions regarding practicum placements, institutions might be able to restructure their practices and policies to ensure that (a) appropriate practicum placements can be found and (b) the placements have little disruptive effects on the schools’ ongoing programs.

Creating Daisies in the Snow: Creating Good Chicago Charter Schools Out of Bad Illinois Charter Legislation

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Background and Objectives

The Illinois Charter School Law of 1996 was meant to improve public education by creating new, more effective schools across the state. In reality, Chicago Public Schools is the only district that has embraced charter schools as a mechanism for educational improvement. School districts are the only entities authorized by the Illinois law to grant charters for new schools, but most state school districts have proven themselves to be either cautious about or hostile to charter schools. The vast majority of districts that have received charter school applications have denied them. This paper examines the intent of the original charter school legislation, analyzes structural mechanisms in the law that have undermined its broad implementation, and describes how Chicago has successfully opened charter schools despite limitations in the authorizing legislation itself.

Charter schools are held to high standards of accountability for student performance in exchange for autonomy and exemption from many state and local regulations, under the theory that such freedom will spur them to find more innovative and effective ways to educate children. By law, a charter school that fails to perform as specified in its accountability agreement can lose its charter and be closed. Though encouraged by favorable federal guidelines, grants, support programs, and general federal advocacy for school choice, each state has crafted its own unique statutory variety of charter schools.

Existing literature on charter schools focuses primarily on three areas: comparison of laws and policies across states, including differences in initial implementation; demographic profiles of charter school students and enrollment patterns; and academic performance. Much recent research looks at the interplay between charter school legislation and implementation. This paper takes that focus to examine the Illinois Charter Schools Law and its implementation in Chicago.

The Illinois charter school law has a national reputation as being relatively “weak.” In this paper, I use Sabatier and Mazmanian’s (1980) framework to analyze factors in the Illinois legislation that impede successful implementation. While the framework was created to analyze regulatory policy as opposed to system-change policy, most of the identified variables are applicable across policy type. Within this theoretical framework, I demonstrate how, even in states with weak legislation, local implementers can create robust environments for charter schools. The experience of Chicago in the first few years of implementing its charter school policy serves as a case study for this argument.

Methods

Interviews with key policy makers and an extensive review of legislative records, newspaper accounts, and internal policy documents shed light on the intent of the charter schools law, the major forces that shaped the legislation, and details of important provisions therein. I review local policy documents and conduct an extensive review of newspaper accounts to document steps taken in Chicago to establish successful charter schools once the law was enacted. I interview key informants, both from the original Chicago Public Schools Charter Schools Office and from the business community’s school policy organization, who were responsible for developing and implementing the charter

school strategy in Chicago. These perspectives are augmented by interviews with school operators in Chicago who were awarded initial charter school contracts.

Findings

Sabatier and Mazmanian identify seventeen variables in three broad categories affecting the implementation of legislative policy. The categories include: “(1) the tractability of the problem(s) being addressed by the statute; (2) the ability of the statute to favorably structure the implementation process; and (3) the net effect of a variety of ‘political’ variables on the balance of support for statutory objectives.” In analyzing the Illinois Charter School Law, I find that none of the identified variables was favorable to successful implementation. The legislation addressed ill-defined and intractable problems, built structural and financial barriers to implementation into the language of the law, and faced organized political opposition and lack of support from implementing officials. Specifically, there is an ill fit between the school choice policy selected by legislators and the school problems they identified and sought to remedy. Newly empowered Republican lawmakers, enamored with school choice policy ideas, tried to authorize voucher programs, regulatory waivers and charter schools as a way to break the stronghold of teachers unions and introduce market reforms into over-bureaucratized public education, aiming particular at the Chicago Public Schools. But no clear or compelling educational theory connected the dots between school choice policies and improved student performance, leaving implementation strategies overly vague. Furthermore, by concentrating veto power in school districts who generally opposed the intent of the law, and then creating financial disincentives for their compliance with the law, the legislation structured its own failure. Despite these fatal flaws in the charter schools law, Chicago Public Schools created some highly successful charter schools. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) lend insight into the ways street-level policy implementers do in fact create policy as they implement it, allowing them to correct for legislative shortcomings. Such was the case in Chicago, as partnerships between the school district, educators and the business community, led by astute policy implementers, allowed charter schools to flourish in that city by establishing necessary structural supports for charter school operators, creating alternative funding mechanisms for crucial facilities and start-up costs, and controlling the application and approval process while sealing out powerful political opponents. By systematically plugging holes in the authorizing legislation, Chicago was able to create good charter schools out of bad charter school legislation.

Implications for Illinois Education

School improvement is obviously a central focus for those concerned with public education in Illinois. School choice, although highly contentious, is one strategy for educational improvement. Strong sentiments about school choice and the accompanying political pressures they conjure have a direct impact on debate about charter schools as a viable educational strategy. Charter school proponents in Illinois seek legislative amendments to expand the number of charters, lift regional caps, and designate alternative authorizers to spur the creation of new charter schools across the state. Opponents, most notably teachers unions and school boards, actively pressure legislators to maintain current restrictions. As Chicago proceeds on pace with its Renaissance 2010 plan, it will rely heavily on charter schools as one important avenue for the expansion of new schools. As suburban counties grow and districts face overcrowding and vocal parent constituencies, the clamor over school choice and school type grows in proportion. These trends will only increase debate over the efficacy and desirability of charter schools. Having a clear understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and controversies in the current law, as well as a model of how one district successfully overcame legislative shortcomings to create robust charter schools, should be of interest to researchers, practitioners and policy makers concerned with educational issues in Illinois.

The Self-Guided Transition: Information, Guidance, and Support for High School Students in Their Quest for a College Education

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College enrollment for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students lags behind students nationwide and in the state of Illinois (Roderick, Nagaoka, and Allensworth, 2006). While it is clear that high levels of academic preparation are important for college access and success (Adelman 1999), there is evidence that an information gap must also be addressed for first-generation college students (Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio 2003). When examining support in this context, we distinguish between press (i.e., encouragement to work hard and accomplish goals) and structured support (i.e., concrete information and advice necessary to successfully navigate the college pipeline). This paper will address two questions: (1) Is there a relationship between a CPS student's likelihood of attending college after graduation and structured support or press (e.g., from parents, teachers, counselors, or peers)? (2) What can students' accounts tell us about how this structured support and press is received and utilized?

This paper draws from the Chicago Postsecondary Transition Project, a new qualitative and quantitative study of the relationship between high school experiences and postsecondary outcomes for CPS graduates. Using data collected from a citywide survey distributed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research in 2005 and the National Student Clearinghouse, this paper examines the first question quantitatively using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to relate reports of college planning in high school to eventual college enrollment. Data from the qualitative component of the research project is used to address the second research question. One hundred and five juniors from three CPS neighborhood high schools were selected to participate in the Chicago Postsecondary Transition Project in spring 2005. These students reflect the diversity of CPS, in terms of race/ethnicity, achievement, and curricular track. Now seniors, these students have been interviewed five times and have answered detailed questions about their future plans as related to the college search, selection, application, and admissions process.

The press and structured support students receive at their schools is related to their likelihood of enrolling in college after they graduate. HLM analyses controlled for students' race/ethnicity, social economic status, and achievement at the student-level. At the school-level analyses controlled for racial/ethnic composition, social-economic composition, and average incoming student achievement. Students attending schools that reported higher levels of these experiences are more likely to enroll in college controlling for student and school-level characteristics.

Student interviews show that levels of structured support and press from parents, teachers, counselors, and peers vary greatly, both across our field schools and also from student to student within schools. First-generation college applicants are especially reliant on their schools for the structured support that their parents, though providing high levels of press, may not be able to supply. These students, often in spite of their level of academic achievement, experience uncoordinated efforts at their schools to help them plan for the future. Frequently, they rely on their peers for such information. Though information is often available at the school, students are required to take the initiative to seek help, and are often left largely on their own to prioritize information, and organize their own plans for selecting, applying to, and gaining admission to college.

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College Retention in Chicago Public School 2003 Graduates

Melanie LaForce
Chicago Public Schools

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have begun tracking their students from high school through their postsecondary path using the National Student Clearinghouse data. Previous reports completed by the Department of Postsecondary Education at CPS have reported initial enrollment data for the class of 2004. While the initial enrollment data have been highly valuable, it is critical to understand CPS graduates' postsecondary retention patterns to gauge student success in college. One year retention rates and three year retention rates were examined.

Of the 2004 graduates, approximately 44% enrolled in college in the fall after graduation. An additional 5.5% enrolled in the spring. Therefore, about 49.5% of 2004 graduates were enrolled in a postsecondary institution by the spring after graduation.

Of the 7,920 students enrolled by fall after graduation, the majority (82%) were still enrolled in an institution in the spring of their first postsecondary year. Thus most students appear to continue at some postsecondary institution through their first year of enrollment.

Of the 9001 students who enrolled by the spring after graduation, 70% returned for fall semester their second year. GPA is a strong predictor of retention, with a nearly linear correlation pattern. This number is somewhat higher than expected; however, there are notable racial disparities in place.

African Americans had the lowest one year retention rate. Approximately 63.3% of African Americans returned to postsecondary for a second year. Latino students showed the next lowest rates of one-year retention, at 70%. These rates are drastically lower than the rate for Asian and white students, at 87% and 82%, respectively.

In contrast to the strong racial differences, there was only a slight gender difference. The one-year retention rate was 69% for males and 71% for females.

The findings are further clarified by the examination of retention at 2-year and 4-year institutions. More students (55% of graduates who enrolled) initially went to 4-year institutions, as compared to those graduates who initially enrolled in 2-year institutions (45% of graduates who enrolled) through the spring after graduation. A staggering 44.4% of students who attended 2-year institutions were not listed as immediately enrolled in the fall of their second year. This figure is highly different from the number of students who initially attended 4-year institutions who were not enrolled in the fall of their second year (18.4%).

Some interesting relationships between these variables emerge. College type continues to be a predictor of retention, even when race and GPA are considered. In addition, though women have lower one year college dropout rates than men at four year institutions (17% to 22% respectively), they have slightly higher rates of dropout than men at two year universities (44% to 42%). Future research should examine interactions between demographic and achievement variables and their effects on college retention.

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Teacher Labour Market Policy-Making in Illinois and England: A Comparative History

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Teacher shortages are not a new phenomenon. In 1531 a medieval English knight wrote, “Now will I somewhat declare of the chief causes why, in our time noble men be not as excellent in learning, as they were in old time among the Romans and Greeks...the principal causes be these: the pride, avarice, and negligence of parents, and the lack or fewness of sufficient masters or teachers.”¹ Over time and to this day, problems with teacher shortages have recurrently troubled Illinois’ public schools. In Illinois, and indeed much of the United States, teacher supply problems are often attributed to the highly decentralized policy-making system which vests most decision-making authority in local school boards. Yet in England, where the political and administrative agencies responsible for securing an adequate teacher labor force are much more centralized, teacher shortages have been a similarly recurring policy problem. This paper attempts to improve our knowledge of why over time policy-makers have continually struggled to secure an adequate teacher supply.

The purpose of this comparative study is to explore how aspects of the institutional arrangements for teacher labor market policy-making in highly centralized and decentralized policy-making systems are related to teacher shortages and to one policy tool often cited as their solution, teacher pay. Underpinned by labor economic theory, the author conducts a systematic historic document review as well as statistical analysis to trace the development of the relevant teacher labor market decision-making agencies in Illinois and England in order to better understand the relative role of institutional structures as opposed to other political, economic, or cultural factors on teacher pay and teacher supply over the past four decades. A comparison is also made of the methodological challenges faced by data limitations in the two settings.

Illinois 879 school boards historically have been the primary agencies responsible for securing an adequate teacher supply in their districts. On the other hand, teacher salaries and conditions and teacher training targets in England have historically been decided primarily by a very small number of national-level agencies. These agencies, however, have repeatedly been deemed ineffective and replaced. In addition to considering their degree of centralization, the author compares the two teacher labor market policy-making systems with reference to their size and complexity and incorporation of formal arrangements for collective bargaining and solicitation of expert advice. Then, using administrative datasets, trends in teachers’ relative salaries and three different types of measurements of teacher shortages are examined. These estimates are compared to more qualitative perceptions of teacher shortages by policy-makers and scholars that emerged in the historic document review.

Most of the existing literature concurs that, while not the only or necessarily most important factor, salaries are indeed an important determinant of teacher supply. However, there is a dearth of research that addresses the determinants of teachers’ salaries. By looking at the effect institutional policy-making arrangements and other factors may have on teachers’ pay and teacher shortages from a cross-national comparative perspective, the author hopes to contribute to what already is known about teacher labor market policy-making in Illinois and England.

¹ Elyot, T., *The Boke Named the Goverour*, 1557, p. 36.

Teacher shortages can be measured either by the number or rate of vacancies or by subtracting the actual number of teachers by the desired number of teachers using a desired pupil-teacher ratio (PTR). The latter method can further be divided into calculations that treat the desired PTR as fixed and those that allow it to vary. Preliminary findings suggest that the choice of technique applied for measuring teacher shortages can lead to quite different conclusions about teacher supply conditions. This has implications for the correlation between teacher shortages, teacher pay, and the institutional and other factors that might affect them. Nevertheless, it does not appear that the level of centralization of the primary teacher labor market decision-making agencies or other institutional factors are associated either with higher teacher pay or improvement of teacher shortages. The implications of these findings are that if there is an answer to the historically recurring teacher supply problem, it most likely lies not in changes to the institutional policy-making arrangements, but in other societal factors.

Supporting Teachers in the Early Years: From the Teachers' Perspective

Robin Erhart, Tammy Douglass, Mike Gibler, Aaron Graves,
Mary McDonald, and Jason Potter
Springfield School District

Springfield Education Association (SEA) has been affiliated with the Teacher Union Reform Network for the last few years. This network is a combination of both NEA and AFT teacher unions from across the country with a common goal of union reform that addresses student achievement issues.

In the summer of 2005, SEA attended the Institute for Teacher Union Leadership (ITUL) in Minneapolis. This Institute is led by a group of reform-minded union leaders who have had various affiliation with TURN over the years. The vision of this Institute is to improve quality of teaching and learning, be responsible to students and families in improving public education so that all children learn and achieve at high levels, have a commitment to promote democratic participation in the union, and to expand the scope of collective bargaining to include instructional and professional issues. The summer training session that SEA attended focused on our efforts to assess our local and make sure we are directing our efforts where we need it most.

In order to begin directing our efforts, we first needed to assess what our 1225 members deemed important to their success in the classroom for their students. We developed a project that would first focus on data collection from our members, identify areas of need, and develop action plans that focus on the identified areas.

Our first data collection efforts began in the fall of 2005. We began by identifying our sample group. The teachers in District 186 with 3-7 years of teaching experience in the district became our first target group for a few of reasons. Our goal is to be sure we are providing support to our newest teachers, but felt our 1-2 year teachers might not necessarily be able to identify exactly what they might need. Secondly, research shows us that the majority of teachers that leave the profession do so in that 3-7 year timeframe. We felt this was an excellent group to interview for identifiable areas of concern. With the cooperation of our district administration, SEA teams comprised of executive board members and IEA UniServe Directors were allowed to host private focus groups during faculty meetings with our members having 3-7 years of teaching experience in the district. This interviewing process was completed in two blocks of days with numerous SEA teams in place and approximately 8-10 members in each focus group. The first block of focus groups we completed at the end of September 2005 and the second at the beginning of December 2005.

The focus groups interviewed the groups with two core questions:

1. What do you need to be the best teacher...teaching assistant...specialist...you can be in District 186? and
2. What is something about your job (or anyone else's) that is most helpful in becoming the best....you want to be in District 186?

The responses to the questions were recorded at each site, returned to be compiled into a useful document. Their feedback around issues and concerns included the following categories of classroom concerns, professional development, money/resources, parent/community, and time. The total number of members contacted under this effort was approximately 319, covering 3 middle schools, 3

high schools, and 17 elementary schools. We utilized an online survey to gain input from the remaining buildings and received an additional 10 responses.

SEA believed our members who did not fit into the 3-7 year criteria also would have great feedback for our project as well. To target them, we analyzed the first set of feedback and identified prevalent areas mentioned above and designed an online survey around those. With the guidance of Julia Koppich, one of our ITUL consultants, we included the following areas in the online survey: classroom concerns, teaching supports, professional development, parent/community involvement, building facilities, financial resources, and time related issues. SEA included an additional section for feedback specifically designed around SEA services as we felt it appropriate to evaluate our services to members.

This online survey was conducted in early April 2006 and opened to all members who had 8 or more years of experience in District 186. SEA received feedback from 247 members out of an estimated 525 members in that bracket.

The next step for Springfield Education Association is to bring all of our data together from our two member surveys and identify further the areas of support we can provide or seek to provide for our membership. With the help of the SEA Executive Committee an action plan will be designed around the identified areas with implementation to begin in Fall 2006. Our intent is to then continue reassessing our efforts once the implementation of the action plan begins.

This project has been continually supported by our ITUL leaders and other locals in Illinois whom we have deemed “critical friends.” Our critical friends for this process have included Decatur Education Association and Elgin Teachers Association with whom we have met with several times this year to help steer our efforts from their insightful feedback.

Working to My Potential: A Look at Differences in the Academic Expectations, Classroom Environment, and Experiences in Different Curricular Tracks

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Increasing access to rigorous coursework in high school is a compelling policy approach to improve students' likelihood of enrolling in college, avoiding remedial courses, and graduating from college (Adelman, 1999; Berkner, He, Cataldi, and Knepper 2002; Horn and Kojaku, 2001). Since the late 1990s, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has taken steps in this direction. Starting with the entering class of 1997-98, CPS raised its graduation requirements to align with the New Basics Curriculum.¹ During this period, CPS also moved to dramatically expand programs such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) in neighborhood high schools.² While enrolling more students in AP and IB courses may be the appropriate course of action to improve college access, it is critical to know what makes these courses different from regular courses in order to better inform the range of policy options available to high schools. This paper addresses two questions: (1) How do the academic expectations, skills, and instructional foci differ across curricular tracks, and does that help us understand better the link between coursework and college outcomes? and (2) Do different academic expectations, skills, and instructional foci affect students' likelihood of enrolling in college?

In order to address these questions, this paper draws from the Chicago Postsecondary Transition Project, a qualitative and quantitative study of the relationship between high school experiences and postsecondary outcomes for CPS graduates. In the qualitative component of the study, we use student interviews, classroom observations, and teacher interviews conducted in three neighborhood high schools that have been part of the recent expansion of AP and IB courses. The quantitative component of the study draws from the Consortium on Chicago School Research's archive of CPS student records and links it to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to identify college enrollment.³ The Consortium's data include detailed information on demographic characteristics, grades, coursework, and test scores, including ACT scores. These data are then linked to responses from the Consortium on Chicago School Research's 2005 survey of all Chicago public high school students and teachers to examine whether the fieldwork findings generalize to other high schools. The survey includes measures of course demands from the perspectives of teachers and students. Finally, we use hierarchical linear analysis to investigate: (1) whether students who report greater rigor in their classrooms have higher grades and test scores, two indicators often used to measure college readiness, and (2) whether rigor is also linked to a greater likelihood of enrolling in more selective colleges after controlling for prior test scores, demographics, and other student and school characteristics.

Our analysis of interviews and survey responses suggest that students in AP and IB courses report higher levels of workload, expectations, and challenge in their coursework compared to honors and regular students. As one student expressed, "If I didn't enroll in the IB program, I probably wouldn't have worked to my potential. I think it is pressing me to find what I can and cannot do, and it is not much that I cannot do." In interviews, AP and IB teachers explicitly described the instructional objectives of their classes and linked these objectives to helping prepare students for the demands of college, particularly by developing students' writing and analytic skills. However, it is unclear whether rigor differs greatly between honors and regular coursework. Students describe honors classrooms

as offering access to higher expectations and peers who behave better and who do their homework, but not as classrooms in which they are asked to do more advanced work or even more work than in regular classes.

As in previous research, we found differences in graduates' likelihood of enrolling in college, particularly in more selective colleges, depending on their curricular track. In addition, we found that students were more likely to get better grades in classes that had higher rigor and academic press, even after controlling for prior achievement, level of course (honors, AP, or IB), and demographics.

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