BACKGROUND

- Charter schools were originally intended to serve as "laboratories of reform" for all schools, and recent literature suggests that they are leveraging their flexibility and are especially innovative in HR management.
- Charter schools in Illinois: 65 schools across 157 campuses
  - Located throughout the state, but mostly (90%) in Chicago
  - Can be unionized (around 30 unionized campuses in Illinois)
- If Illinois charter schools were a single district, they would be the 2nd largest district in the state (~59,000 students)
- Human resource management describes the strategies that schools use to recruit, support, retain, and reward teachers
- Recent efforts at all levels (school, district, state, federal) have sought to improve HR management in schools

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How do Illinois charter schools practice HR management? Are there any differences in these practices by school characteristics (Chicago vs. non); HS vs. elementary/mid; network-affiliated vs. standalone; newer schools vs. more mature schools; unionized vs. non)?
2) What are common themes in HR practices across schools and across HR functions? What factors account for the majority of HR practices in charter schools? Are there any differences in these strategies by school characteristics?
3) What are the relationships between charter school HR strategies and teacher retention, school learning conditions, and student achievement gains?

DATA

- Participants: 27 of 57 (47%) Illinois charter schools representing 60% of the state’s charter school students
  - For the purposes of this study, “schools” = stand-alone schools OR multi-campus networks
  - Representative sample
  - Phone interviews and online surveys with Illinois charter school administrators during the 2013-14 school year
- Questions organized around existing HR management frameworks across key functions:
  - Recruitment
  - Selection
  - Orientation and mentoring
  - In-service professional development
  - Evaluation
  - Compensation
- Retention
- 2013-14 data on teacher retention, learning conditions, and student achievement from ISBE and CPS

ANALYSIS: Typology of HR Management Strategies

- Looking across schools and functions to view HR strategies as a cross-cutting system of theoretically and statistically coherent practices, rather than isolated components
- Identified four broad themes that describe HR management strategies in Illinois charter schools:
  - Incentivist reforms
  - Information-rich decision-making
  - Mission-driven practices
  - Teacher support and empowerment

RESULTS

- HR practices have no consistent, systematic relationship to teacher retention (as measured here) or any of the three “essential” learning conditions used in this study (ambitious instruction, effective leaders, or collaborative teachers)
- Teacher empowerment practices were positively and significantly related to the SEs teacher influence measure, but negatively associated with the SEs measure of academic press
- Information-rich decision-making was inversely related to the SEs school commitment measure
- No statistically significant relationship between individual HR practices and state test scores after controlling for poverty and prior test results
- Statistically significant relationships between incentive practices and math gains (relative to the state as a whole)
  - Coefficient for % incentivist practices is consistently large and positive in models using state tests, but not on those using NWEA
- Taken together, these results suggest that incentivist practices may have some positive association with math achievement gains, but this is largely dependent on how school achievement is being measured
  - There is little evidence from these analyses that any of the other set of HR practices consistently affects school achievement gains

SELECTED REFERENCES