Achievement Gaps Associated with SES in Hamburg Schools: How do they Change as Students get Older?

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ABSTRACT

The positive relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and academic achievement is well established, but the way in which this relationship varies with age is not. A better understanding of this issue could offer guidelines on when and how to target social investments aimed at equalizing educational opportunities of students coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This study explores whether academic achievement gaps related to SES change as students get older and, if so, how they change. It is based on the Hamburg School Achievement Census 1996 to 2000 (LAU 5, 7 and 9; N ≈ 13,000) and focuses on the academic achievement in reading and math of students aged 10-15. A set of econometric techniques and hierarchical linear models (HLM) are applied to address this research question for the overall student population and students within school tracks. Findings suggest that while the reading achievement gap between low and high SES students narrows with age, the math achievement gap remains stable.

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