

Elementary and Middle School Principal Effects on Future Academic, Behavioral and Labor-Market Outcomes

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Abstract

Evidence that teacher effects on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills contribute to longer-term academic, social and labor-market outcomes highlights potential limitations of a singular focus on achievement and the importance of measuring and identifying educator effects on the development of a range of skills. This likely holds even more for school leaders than for teachers, and in this study, we use administrative longitudinal data from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the state of Texas to estimate elementary and middle-school principal effects on cognitive and non-cognitive skills and on longer-term outcomes. The panel data sets that span roughly twenty years each enable us to account for observed and unobserved influences by focusing on comparisons between two principals who served at the same school and students from different schools who attend the same high school. The preliminary estimates reveal substantial variation in principal effects on current achievement, achievement, absences and disciplinary infractions during high school, and on college attendance and persistence and the probability of being in college or employed following high school graduation. In the case of Texas middle schools, it appears that effects are much stronger for lower-achievement students. The strong correlations principal effects on 9th grade absences and effect on the probability of being in school or employed following high school highlights the importance of considering and measuring effects on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills.