

WORKING P A P E R

Going Beyond Test Scores

Evaluating Charter School Impact on Educational Attainment in Chicago and Florida

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WR-610-BMG

August 2008

Prepared for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, the Stranahan Foundation, and the William Penn Foundation

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Summary

Unlike past charter school studies, which focus on student achievement, we analyze the relationship between charter high school attendance and educational attainment. We find that charter high schools in Florida and in Chicago have substantial positive effects on both high school completion and college attendance. Controlling for observed student characteristics and test scores, univariate probit estimates indicate that among students who attended a charter middle school, those who went on to attend a charter high school were 7 to 15 percentage points more likely to earn a standard diploma than students who transitioned to a traditional public high school. Similarly, those attending a charter high school were 8 to 10 percentage points more likely to attend college. Using the proximity of charters and other types of high schools as exogenous instruments for charter high school attendance, we find even stronger effects in bivariate probit models of charter attendance and educational attainment. While large, our estimates are in line with previous studies of the impact of Catholic high schools on educational attainment.

*This research was funded by generous grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, the Stranahan Foundation, and the William Penn Foundation. We also wish to thank Phil Gleason, Elaine Allensworth, David Figlio, Dan Goldhaber, Eric Isenberg, and John Witte for valuable comments. The authors are solely responsible for the analysis and conclusions in the paper, however.