COMMENTARY

More Teacher Effectiveness Research

AUTHOR
Jennifer Imazeki | San Diego State University

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An upcoming issue of the Economics of Education Review will have several papers originally prepared for the 2011 conference "Performance Pay: Will it Work? Is it Politically Viable?" at Harvard's Kennedy School.

Those following the debate on value-added models of teacher effectiveness may be particularly interested in three of the papers:

It's Easier to Pick a Good Teacher than to Train One: Familiar and New Results on the Correlates of Teacher Effectiveness by Matthew M. Chingos & Paul E. Peterson.

ABSTRACT: Neither holding a college major in education nor acquiring a master's degree is correlated with elementary and middle school teaching effectiveness, regardless of the university at which the degree was earned. Teachers generally do become more effective with a few years of teaching experience, but we also find evidence that teachers may become less effective with experience, particularly later in their careers. These and other findings with respect to the correlates of teacher effectiveness are obtained from estimations using value-added models that control for student characteristics as well as school and (where appropriate teacher) fixed effects in order to measure teacher effectiveness in reading and math for Florida students in fourth through eighth grades for eight school years, 2001–02 through 2008–09.

What's in a Rating? by Brian A. Jacob & Elias Walsh

ABSTRACT: We examine the relationship between the formal ratings that principals give teachers and a variety of observable teacher characteristics, including proxies for productivity. Prior work has shown that principals can differentiate between more and less effective teachers, especially at the tails of the quality distribution, and that subjective evaluations of teachers are strongly correlated with subsequent student achievement. However, whereas prior work has relied on survey data, we consider formal ratings from a setting in which the stakes are reasonably high. We find that the ratings are correlated with an array of teacher qualities including experience for young teachers, education credentials, and teacher absenteeism. Our finding that principals reward qualities of teachers known to be related to student productivity provides reason to be optimistic about policies that would assign more weight to principal evaluations of teachers in career decisions and compensation.

The Economic Value of Higher Teacher Quality by Eric A. Hanushek

ABSTRACT: Most analyses of teacher quality end without any assessment of the economic value of altered teacher quality. This paper combines information about teacher effectiveness with the economic impact of higher achievement. It begins with an overview of what is known about the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement. This provides the basis for consideration of the derived demand for teachers that comes from their impact on economic outcomes. Alternative valuation methods are based on the impact of increased achievement on individual earnings and on the impact of low teacher effectiveness

on economic growth through aggregate achievement. A teacher one standard deviation above the mean effectiveness annually generates marginal gains of over $400,000 in present value of student future earnings with a class size of 20 and proportionately higher with larger class sizes. Alternatively, replacing the bottom 5-8 percent of teachers with average teachers could move the U.S. near the top of international math and science rankings with a present value of $100 trillion.

PACE
Policy Analysis for California Education

Stanford Graduate School of Education
507 Lasuen Mall | Suite 205
Stanford, CA 94305
Phone: 650.576.8484

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