Efficacy of Every Classroom, Every Day: Results from a Two Year Randomized Trial of a High-School Instructional Improvement Program

Justification

High-quality classroom instruction is the core of effective schooling. Indeed, the National Research Council’s Committee on Increasing School Students’ Engagement and Motivation to Learn (2004) argued forcefully that, although school-level policies and efforts to restructure schools may benefit students in myriad of ways, student learning is most directly and deeply affected by how and what teachers teach. To this end, this symposium presents three papers describing a school-randomized field trial (S-RFT) of Every Classroom, Every Day (ECED), an instructional improvement model designed to improve high school math and literacy instruction, with the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement in math and literacy.

For the Every Classroom, Every Day Efficacy Trial, 20 high schools (5 districts, 4 schools per district) were randomly assigned to either the treatment (n = 10) or control (n = 10) condition, with two high schools from each district being assigned to each condition. The schools were located in four states. They were generally large, with an average enrollment over 1,300 and served predominately students from low-income families. Treatment schools received ECED supports for two years. There were five primary types of data collected: (1) student surveys, (2) teacher surveys, and (3) classroom observations, using the Engagement, Alignment, and Rigor (EAR) Classroom Visit Protocol, each collected once near the start and end of each academic year; as well as (4) variation-in-implementation interviews with math and literacy coaches and a school administrator, and (5) student records.

Each paper in this symposium will present a different aspect of this large-scale study. The first paper will present details about the ECED Instructional Improvement model, as well as its background and rationale, information on how variation in implementation was assessed, and how well the treatment schools implemented the model. The second paper will present details on the methods used to evaluate ECED and the statistical approach used to analyze, as well as presenting the student-level findings. Specifically, the second paper will present student outcome findings for both the causal intent-to-treat and non-experimental treatment-on-the-treated models. The third paper will present the teacher-level findings, specifically addressing the extent to which math and English/Language Arts teachers’ attitudes and observed instruction changed as a result to their participation in ECED. The papers will be followed by a discussion from James Kemple at the Research Alliance for New York City Schools at New York University.

Findings from the evaluation show that many components of ECED were implemented fairly successfully, but other components, including the deployment of math coaches and the use of the EAR protocols by school leaders to improve instruction, were only partially implemented. Overall impacts were mixed. ECED had positive impacts on student math achievement but not on English language arts achievement or students’ attitudes toward school. ECED also had positive impacts on observed rigor, but negative impacts on observed engagement in the classroom. Findings also suggested that ECED may have had a negative impact on teacher mutual support. Implications of these mixed findings will be discussed and ideas for improvement will be solicited.