Lessons Learned: Understanding Education Policy Choices

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These Slides Present...

• Some facts
• Some issues we might discuss
Enrollment in Grades PreK through 12th

Total Enrollment: 55.7 Million
   Public Share: 90.3%
   Private Share: 9.7%

Distribution of Publicly Funded Enrollment:
   Traditional Public Schools: 94.1%
   Charter Schools: 5.4%
   Voucher Supported Schools: 0.5%
Most US Students Are Educated in Suburban Schools

Illustrate with K-12 Enrollments in Two Metro Areas

Chicago Metro Area: 353 School Districts
- City Enrollment: 392,831
- Suburban Enrollment: 1,142,522
- City Share: 26 Percent

Boston Metro Area: 125 School Districts
- City Enrollment: 54,300
- Suburban Enrollment: 462,489
- City Share: 11 Percent
School Choice in US Metropolitan Areas

Schools play a central role in household decisions about where to live.

This gives rise to tremendous stratification of households by income across locations in metropolitan areas.

In particular, there is stratification
- Across schools within districts, and
- Across Districts

As a result:

Poor students are disproportionately educated in central city school districts.
Median Household Income Plotted Against District Income Rank
Boston Metro Area

Rank by District Median Household Income
Income Stratification in Chicago

The next two figures illustrate income stratification across high schools in the city of Chicago and in the Chicago metro area.

The first graph illustrates income sorting across city schools:

• City high schools are ordered from highest to lowest share of low income students.

• Actual sorting is compared to sorting if students were assigned randomly to schools.

The second graph illustrates income sorting across all metro area high schools.
City of Chicago High Schools Ranked by Percent Low Income Students

If households were assigned randomly, the percent low income students in almost all schools would be within these bounds.
Almost all city high schools have a higher fraction of poor students than almost all Suburban schools.
School Effectiveness

• We care about effectiveness of all schools.
• Because they educate our most disadvantaged students, we particularly care about the effectiveness of schools serving students in central cities.
• We have learned from research on charters and vouchers that these policies can sometimes yield improvements, and they deserve continued experimentation, but they are not reliably effective ways to improve achievement.
• In his excellent book on the economics of education, Prof. Derek Neal has identified changes with respect to teacher tenure and practices with respect to teacher pay that offer promise. We might discuss these this evening.
Reviews of the Evidence on Vouchers, Charter Schools, and Peer Effects


Appendices
Reforms That Have Potential for Improving School Effectiveness

Increase the amount of time before granting tenure

Discontinue practice of increasing pay when teachers obtain masters degrees. Evidence shows these do not enhance teaching effectiveness.

Introduce differential pay to enable districts to hire teachers where skills are scarce. This will encourage more entering teachers to develop those scarce skills.
Central City Schools and Charter Schools Tend to Be Disproportionately Non-White
In Most Central City Districts, Charter Schools Serve Even More Poor Students Than Do Public Schools