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EFP Takeaways

Advanced Placement and Initial College Enrollment: Evidence from an Experiment

Background

Increasingly, researchers and policy makers are considering how time spent outside of the classroom affects a range of student outcomes. Alicia Sasser Modestino and Richard Paulsen consider one type of out-of-school activity: early work experience. Specifically, they look at the high school academic outcomes of students who participated in the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Their work is published in vol. 18 issue 1 of *EFP*.

The Study

Based on the randomized admissions lottery used by the Boston SYEP, the authors compare the outcomes of students who applied to the program and were randomly selected to participate (treatment group) to those that applied and were not selected to participate (control group). Using administrative school records, the authors estimate the effect of being selected to participate in the Boston SYEP on academic outcomes including attendance rates, GPAs, graduating from high school on time, and more.

For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in *Education Finance and Policy*](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future *EFP Takeaways*](#).
- Summary of:
Modestino, A. & Paulsen, R. (2023) School's Out: How Summer Youth Employment Programs Impact Academic Outcomes. *Education Finance and Policy*, 18 (1): 97-126.

Findings

Relative to the control group, lottery winners were 4.4 percentage points (7% improvement) more likely to graduate from high school on time. This was largely due to a 2.5 percentage point reduction in the likelihood of dropping out of high school during the four-year post-program observation period.

Interim outcomes measured one year post participation show:

- Improved attendance rates by 2.4 percentage points due to reducing unexcused absences by 2.1 days.
- Reduced chronic absenteeism by 6.9 percentage points (10% reduction), with larger improvements for youth age 16+.
- Small improvements in GPA (6.8 percent increase) but no reduction in course failures.

Linking the academic records to self-reported survey data, the authors show that these outcomes are correlated with increasing aspirations to attend college, gaining basic work habits, and improving social skills over the course of the summer.

Given that high school graduates have better outcomes than dropouts along a number of dimensions (employment, income, criminal behavior, and social services), the authors estimate that the long-term benefits of the Boston SYEP outweigh the costs by a factor of 2 to 1.