The Impact of Inclusive STEM High Schools on Student Achievement

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Abstract
This study is the first to estimate the impact of “inclusive” science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) high schools using student-level data. We employ a number of statistical strategies to estimate the effect on student achievement of two years of attendance at six such high schools in Ohio. The results indicate that only one school has had a positive effect on achievement—a positive effect in science that appears to have come at the expense of achievement in social studies. On the other hand, three of the six schools are associated with substantial negative effects across both STEM and, particularly, non-STEM subjects. The analysis reveals the critical importance of accounting for students’ prior test scores in science, in addition to math and reading, when estimating the impact of these STEM high schools. Doing so alters significantly the estimated STEM school effects across all subjects.