Open Enrolment and Student Achievement

Jane Friesen
Simon Fraser University

Benjamin Cerf Harris
Center for Administrative Records Research and Applications
U.S. Census Bureau

Simon Woodcock
Simon Fraser University

October 2013

Abstract
We investigate the effects of public school open enrolment, which allows students to enroll in any public school with available space, on fourth grade test scores. We find a small, positive effect on the average student; this benefit appears to stem from increased competition among schools, rather than directly through expanded choice opportunities. Among students whose catchment school is locally top-ranked according to test scores, greater choice is of no direct benefit; however, students whose catchment school is locally lowest-ranked earn higher scores when they have access to better local schools. Students in both groups benefit from increased school competition.

JEL codes: I21, I28
Keywords: open enrolment, school choice, school competition