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The Effects of Test-based Retention on Student Outcomes over Time: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Florida

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Abstract

Many American states require that students lacking basic reading proficiency after third grade be retained and remediated. We exploit a discontinuity in retention probabilities under Florida's test-based promotion policy to study its effects on student outcomes through high school. We find large positive effects on achievement that fade out entirely when retained students are compared to their same-age peers, but remain substantial through grade 10 when compared to students in the same grade. Being retained in third grade due to missing the promotion standard increases students' grade point averages and leads them to take fewer remedial courses in high school but has no effect on their probability of graduating.

JEL-Code: H52, I21, I28

Keywords: Educational production, public schools, grade retention

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