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Parental Incentives and Early Childhood Achievement: A Field Experiment in Chicago Heights

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This article describes a randomized field experiment in which parents were provided financial incentives to engage in behaviors designed to increase early childhood cognitive and executive function skills through a parent academy. Parents were rewarded for attendance at early childhood sessions, completing homework assignments with their children, and for their child's demonstration of mastery on interim assessments. This intervention had large and statistically significant positive impacts on both cognitive and non-cognitive test scores of Hispanics and Whites, but no impact on Blacks. These differential outcomes across races are not attributable to differences in observable characteristics (e.g. family size, mother's age, mother's education) or to the intensity of engagement with the program. Children with above median (pre-treatment) non cognitive scores accrue the most benefits from treatment.



Acknowledgments

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