Week 6:
Standards-Based Accountability
Recognizing and Rewarding Success

• Underlying assumption is that schools can be better, they just need the right incentives
  – Issues associated with design of reward programs
    • What will be measured
    • Complexity of system
    • Decisions adjusting for factors outside of schools’ control (e.g. SES)
    • The linking of “performance” to rewards
  – Potential unintended effects
    • Teaching to the test
    • Program manipulation and cheating
    • Teacher morale
SC and DISD Accountability Systems (Clotfelter and Ladd)

• Both systems:
  – Use value-added methodology
  – Base school assessments on school wide gains

• They differ in:
  – How they calculate students’ predicted gains (no socioeconomic variables in SC system - political issue)
    • Correlation between ranking and SES
  – Distribution of rewards (awards in SC cannot be used used for direct payments to teachers)
Econometric Estimates of Effects of DISD System on Student Outcomes

• Compare growth in DISD before and after new accountability with growth in other large cities in TX (difference in differences methodology)

• Relative to TX as a whole, growth in (TAAS) pass rates in DISD exceed growth in other large cities, but …
  – 1992 (statistically significant) results are suspect since they occurred before the accountability system was in place
Rapid Achievement Gains in NC and TX (Grissmer and Flanagan)

- TX and NC show largest (adjusted) average gains on NAEP in reading and math
  - NAEP verifies gains on state assessments, which tend to show rapid increases in early years of new test
  - Largest gains (in TX) are reported for minority populations - suggests accountability can help close BWTSG, but why?

- After elimination of other explanations, case studies suggests it’s accountability
The Implications of Standards (Lillard and DeCicca)

• Theory suggests that higher standards have an ambiguous cost/benefit impact
  – Increase in direct and indirect costs
  – Increase in human capital or signaling

• Analysis of how course graduation requirements (CGRs) affect high school completion
  – 3 problems in estimation: omitted variable bias, endogeneity of CGR, heteroskedastic error terms
The Down Side of Standards

• Aggregate analysis
  – Higher CGRs are associated with increase in high school attrition and drop out rates
    • Statistical significance, but not magnitude of effect, is robust to various specifications of model
    • One standard deviation increase in CGRs increases the attrition rate by .8-1.6 % pts., drop out rate by .3-.5 % pts.

• Individual level analysis tends to confirm aggregate results

• Impacts are estimated to disproportionately effect minorities
No Child Left Behind

• National variant of standards based accountability movement
  – Built to be similar to system in TX, but …

• Increases testing in grades 3-8
  – Test scores will be used to judge AYP
  – All student subgroups must show progress
  – States set standards

• Increases requirements for teachers
  – States set standards (within broad boundaries) of “qualified”

• Schools/districts not meeting AYP
  – May be required to offer more choice options
  – Have to surrender Title 1 money to parents
  – Can be reconstituted
Potential Pitfalls of NCLB

• States/districts/schools and teachers may “game the system” so as to make it look like educational progress is being achieved, when in fact it is not

• Ways to game the system:
  – Strategic allocation of teacher effort
  – Shaping of the tested pool
  – Makeup of a school
  – Tallying methods used for measuring AYP
  – “Adjustment” of standards

• Backlash against the notion that standards based accountability can make a difference