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Extra Credit: Harlem Charter School Students More Likely to Attend College

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Together with Harvard Professor of Economics Roland Fryer, Will Dobbie, assistant professor of economics and public affairs, analyzed survey data collected from 6th graders that entered the Harlem charter school through a lottery system in 2005 and 2006.

A school in Harlem is seeing positive outcomes that stretch beyond test scores – including higher college-acceptance rates and lower incidences of teen pregnancy and incarceration, according to a [Princeton-Harvard University study](#).

Test scores improved for the poor, urban students attending Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy Charter School, which boasts a longer school year and a comprehensive network of community resources. Students who attend the Promise Academy are 49 percent more likely to attend college, 71 percent less likely to become pregnant and 100 percent less likely to be incarcerated than their Harlem peers attending public schools, the researchers report. Their findings – some of the first to examine the benefits of a charter *after* graduation – were published by the National Bureau of Economic Research.



Together with Harvard Professor of Economics Roland Fryer, Will Dobbie, assistant professor of economics and public affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, analyzed survey data collected from 407 of the 570 6th graders that entered the Harlem charter school through a lottery system in 2005 and 2006. Students were asked questions related to their education achievement and attainment, their risk-taking behaviors and personal health. They also evaluated the students' math and reading skills through the Woodcock-Johnson intelligence tests, a series of exams used to determine a wider range of cognitive skills.

Dobbie and Fryer then augmented these results with administrative data from the New York City Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse. They compared those Harlem students that won the lottery with the 163 students who did not. While the researchers did see extremely lower rates of incarceration and pregnancy and higher rates of college attendance, they found little impact on asthma, obesity, or mental health on those same students – though lottery winners reported eating more nutritious foods.



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"Using data from the Promise Academy in the Harlem Children's Zone, we provide a proof-of-concept that the best practices used by high-performing charter schools can impact adult outcomes," said Dobbie.

Dobbie said Harlem's Promise Academy is reasonably representative of charter schools nationwide and only differs in that it serves more economically disadvantaged youth.

The paper, "[The Medium-Term Impacts of High-Achieving Charter Schools on Non-Test Score Outcomes](#)," was first published online Oct. 28 by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Funding was provided by the Broad Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

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