**The Full School Day Evaluation**

The Chicago Public Schools have had one of the shortest school days of any major urban public school system in the country. The new administration is making it a priority to extend the length of the school day as part of a larger strategy to improve schooling outcomes for children in our city, motivated by a large body of previous social science evidence that “time on task” is an important predictor of how much students learn in a classroom.

The Urban Education Lab will study the effects of extending the length of the school day on those CPS schools that are implementing this policy change during the 2011-12 academic year. To examine whether students do better (i.e. attend school more, achieve better results on standardized tests) with the full day and to try to learn more about how and why some schools may more effectively use the extra time afforded by the full day, the UEL research team will:

- Compare student outcomes at the end of this school year for those CPS schools where teachers voted to extend the school day – but just barely – with student outcomes in CPS schools where teachers did not vote to extend the school day – but nearly did. We would expect other determinants of student achievement to be fairly similar across the two types of schools being compared, thereby helping isolate the independent effects of the longer school day itself.
- Carry out a study that is nearly as rigorous as the sort of prospective randomized clinical trial of the sort that is common in medicine given that several of the CPS schools that are extending the school year during the 2011-12 school year are selective enrollment or magnet schools that use randomized lotteries to admit students. Our team can compare the effects of winning vs. losing an admissions lottery to these schools during this school year (when the schools are implementing the longer school day), with the effects of winning the admissions lottery to these same schools during the prior year (when the schools had not yet implemented the longer school day).
- Compare changes over time in overall average student outcomes in schools that did versus did not adopt the new longer school day this year, before versus after adoption of the longer school day by the “treatment schools,” as part of a standard “difference-in-differences” research study. We can refine this standard approach in two ways: first, by focusing on outcomes of students who are living just on either side of school catchment boundaries for schools that did versus did not adopt the longer school day policy, to help do a better job holding neighborhood-level influences on achievement constant between the “treatment” and “control” groups of students that are being compared; and second, using synthetic control group methods to construct a matched set of comparison schools for each of the treatment schools individually to create a series of school-by-school impact estimates. Focusing on the effects of longer school days individually in each school also has the advantage of enabling the UEL to try to learn more about how and why some schools are able to do a relatively better job of translating the longer school day into improved student learning.

The UEL study of the full school day changes in the 2011-12 school year will be carried out pro bono to the city, and will complement the case study and related activities on longer school day being carried out by the UEL’s sister organization, the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR).