

John Westall

August 2022

Office Contact Information

Michigan State University
Education Policy Innovation Collaborative
236 Erickson Hall | 620 Farm Ln
East Lansing, MI 48824

Personal Contact Information

Phone: (919) 986-2927
Email: westall12@msu.edu
Homepage: www.johnwestall.com

Academic Appointments

Education Policy Innovation Collaborative, Michigan State University
Postdoctoral Research Fellow

2021 - Present

Education

North Carolina State University
Ph.D., Economics

2021

San Diego State University
M.A., Economics

2016

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
B.A., Economics

2014

Fields

Primary: Education, Labor
Secondary: Market Design

Publications

"High School Start Times and Student Achievement: Looking Beyond Test Scores," with Matthew Lenard and Melinda Morrill.

Economics of Education Review. Volume 76, June 2020, 101975.

"The Role of Social Security in Retirement Timing: Evidence from a National Sample of Teachers," with Melinda Morrill.

Journal of Pension Economics and Finance, October 2019, 18(Special Issue 4) , 549-564.

Working Papers

Job Market Paper: "The Effects of Early Literacy Policies on Student Achievement" with Amy Cummings

Given the importance of early literacy to long-term student success, by 2021, 41 states and the District of Columbia had adopted an early literacy policy to improve student literacy by the end of third grade. Using an event study approach, we examine the impacts of these policies on high- and low-stakes test scores. We find that adopting an early literacy policy improves elementary students' reading achievement on high-stakes assessments. The largest gains occur in third grade and states with comprehensive early literacy policies, particularly those with third-grade retention requirements. However, we find little evidence of significant gains in low-stakes test scores except in states with comprehensive policies. Our results provide compelling evidence that early literacy policies improve achievement on high-stakes assessments, and these gains are equitably distributed. However, these high-stakes test-score gains may not necessarily lead to increased literacy learning, as evidenced by limited effects on low-stakes tests.

"Heterogeneity in the Educational Impacts of Natural Disasters: Evidence from Hurricane Florence" with Melinda Morrill

Revise and Resubmit at Economics of Education Review, [Link to Working Paper](#)

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence caused widespread and extended school closures throughout North Carolina. Using a difference-in-differences framework, we explore within-school variation in the impact of hurricane-related schooling disruption on students' end-of-grade test scores. Impacts were not concentrated on students performing at the lowest levels in the prior year nor on those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Rather, the estimates suggest that most students experienced small declines in test performance irrespective of baseline human capital or demographic group.

"The Labor Market Consequences of Principal Performance Pay"

Under Review [Link to Working Paper](#)

Coverage: [Education Next](#)

This paper studies whether test score-based performance pay for public-school principals affects principals' labor market decisions. I leverage the introduction of a principal performance pay system in North Carolina in July 2017. The new compensation system removed experience and education as determinants of principal salaries; now, principal pay is determined by school test-score growth. I provide evidence that performance pay's financial incentives induce the sorting of principals within and exit from the principalship and the traditional public school labor force. One year after the introduction of performance pay, principals financially rewarded by the new compensation system were more likely to continue working as principals at a different school. Principals not financially rewarded, whose wages stagnate under the new performance pay system, were more likely to leave the principalship and exit or move into other positions. These labor market responses created compositional and distributional changes in the principal labor force. Performance pay induced exits from experienced principals but also principals managing persistently low-performing schools. At the same time, it attracted different principals to persistently low-performing schools. My results demonstrate that principal performance pay can push potentially ineffective principals out of their positions and attract principals to harder-to-staff, low-performing schools.

Works in Progress

"Following the Letter of the Law: Retention Outcomes Under Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law" with Katharine O. Strunk and Andrew Utter

"The Accuracy of "Reading Deficiency" Identification: Evidence from Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law" with Katharine O. Strunk and Andrew Utter

"Are You My Teacher? Intra-School Teacher Assignments in Michigan for Students with "Reading Deficiencies"" with Katharine O. Strunk and Andrew Utter

"Diplomas Left Behind: The Impact of No Child Left Behind on High School Graduation"

Technical Reports

Westall, J., Kilbride, T., & Strunk, K. O. (2022). 2022 Preliminary Read by Grade Three Retention Estimates. Education Policy Innovation Collaborative. https://epicedpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/RBG3_retention_report_Sept2022.pdf

Strunk, K. O., Wright, T. S., **Westall, J.,** Zhu, Q., Kilbride, T., Cummings, A., Utter, A., & Mavrogordato, M. (2022). Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law: Year two report. Education Policy Innovation Collaborative. https://epicedpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/RBG3_Rpt_Yr2_Feb2022.pdf

Westall, J., Kilbride, T., & Strunk, K. O. (2021). Read by Grade Three Law Initial Retention Decisions. Education Policy Innovation Collaborative. <https://epicedpolicy.org/read-by-grade-three-law-initial-retention-decisions/>

Westall, J., Kilbride, T., & Strunk, K. O. (2021). Preliminary Read by Grade Three Retention Estimates. Education Policy Innovation Collaborative. <https://epicedpolicy.org/preliminary-read-by-grade-three-retention-estimates/>

Presentations

"The Accuracy of "Reading Deficiency" Identification: Evidence from Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law" with Katharine O. Strunk and Andrew Utter

- Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Conference, Nov 2022 (*Scheduled*)
- Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference, Mar 2022

"The Labor Market Consequences of Principal Performance Pay"

- Michigan State University MITTENSS Research Workshop, Feb 2022
- Southern Economics Association Annual Conference, Nov 2021
- Triangle Applied Microeconomics Conference, May 2021
- Carolina Region Empirical Economics Day, May 2021
- Government Accountability Office, Jan 2021
- Institute for Defense Analyses, Jan 2021
- Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference, Mar 2021
- Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Conference, Nov 2020

"Which Students are Most Impacted by Extended School Closures?"

- Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference, Mar 2021

"High School Start Times and Student Achievement: Looking Beyond Test Scores"

- Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference, Mar 2020
- Carolina Region Empirical Economics Day, May 2019
- North Carolina State University Microeconomics Workshop, April 2019

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record:

Principles of Microeconomics:	Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Fall 2019, Spring 2020 (NC State)
Principles of Macroeconomics:	Fall 2015, Spring 2016 (San Diego State)

Teaching Assistant:

Principles of Microeconomics:	Fall 2014, Spring 2015 (San Diego State); Fall 2016, Spring 2017 (NC State, Lab Instructor)
Labor Economics (Undergraduate):	Fall 2018 (NC State)
Microeconomics (Ph.D.):	Spring 2019 (NC State)

Honors and Fellowships

Jenkins Fellow, North Carolina State University, 2020-2021
 University Graduate Fellowship, North Carolina State University, 2016-2017
 Terhune Economics Scholarship, San Diego State University, 2015-2016

Referee Service

Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis

References

Katharine O. Strunk

Clifford Erickson Professor of Education
Policy
Michigan State University
✉ kstrunk@msu.edu

Melinda Morrill

Professor of Economics
North Carolina State University and
NBER
✉ msmorril@ncsu.edu

Anna Egalite

Associate Professor of Educational Lead-
ership, Policy, and Human Development
North Carolina State University
✉ anna_egalite@ncsu.edu

Thayer Morrill

Professor of Economics
North Carolina State University
✉ tsmorril@ncsu.edu