

# John Westall

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## Office Contact Information

Michigan State University  
Education Policy Innovation Collaborative  
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## Academic Appointments

### **Postdoctoral Research Fellow**

Education Policy Innovation Collaborative, Michigan State University

2021 - Present

## Education

### **North Carolina State University, Ph.D. in Economics**

2021

#### Dissertation Title:

Essays in the Economics of Education

#### Committee:

Melinda Morrill, Department of Economics

Anna Egalite, College of Education

Thayer Morrill, Department of Economics

Raymond Guiteras, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

### **San Diego State University, M.A. in Economics**

2016

### **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, B.A. in 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

"The Labor Market Consequences of Principal Performance Pay"

### [Link to Working Paper](#)

I study whether test-based performance pay for public-school principals affects principals' labor market transitions. I leverage a policy change in North Carolina, which implemented a test-based performance pay system for school principals in 2017. I provide evidence that performance pay's financial incentives induce positive sorting of principals throughout the traditional public school labor force. Principals with characteristics that are not rewarded by performance pay are more likely to leave their positions. The principals who left are more experienced but less effective at improving test-score growth. Principals rewarded by performance pay are more likely to remain a principal but transfer to a different school. These transfers are driven by principals moving from small schools and to larger, recurring low-performing, and Title I schools. My results demonstrate that principal performance pay can push ineffective principals out of their positions and attract effective and experienced principals to traditionally harder-to-staff schools.

"Which Students are Most Impacted by Extended School Closures?" with Melinda Morrill  
*Revised & Resubmitted, [Link to Working Paper](#)*

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence caused widespread and extended school closures throughout North Carolina. We leverage this geographic variation to assess whether the impacts on learning depends on students' baseline characteristics. There is robust evidence of small declines on reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests. Importantly, those performing at the lowest levels in the prior year did not experience disproportionate losses. The impacts are slightly larger for middle versus elementary school students. Although Black and economically disadvantaged students experience the largest test score losses, our estimates suggest that all students felt the effects irrespective of baseline human capital or demographic group.

### Works in Progress

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

"Strategic Responses to Early Literacy Laws: Evidence from Michigan's Read by Grade" with Katharine O. Strunk, Amy Cummings, and Andrew Utter

"Effects of Early Literacy Policies on Student Achievement" with Amy Cummings

"Some Children Left Behind: Retention Outcomes Under Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law" with Andrew Utter and Katharine O. Strunk

### Presentations

"The Labor Market Consequences of Principal Performance Pay"

- Southern Economics Association Annual Conference, Nov 2021 (*Scheduled*)
- Triangle Applied Microeconomics Conference, May 2021
- Carolina Region Empirical Economics Day, May 2021
- Government Accountability Office, January 2021
- Institute for Defense Analyses, January 2021
- Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference, March 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, March 2021

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

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

### Teaching Experience

Instructor:

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

**Citizenship**

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