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Who Chooses in Hartford? Regional School Choice Office Applications from Hartford-resident HPS students in 2012

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Who Chooses in Hartford?
Regional School Choice Office Applications from Hartford-resident HPS students in 2012

presentation for
Magnet Schools of America, May 2014
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with Diane Zannoni and Marissa Block
Cities Suburbs & Schools Project
Trinity College, Hartford CT
Research question:

Which Hartford-area families are more/less likely to apply for public school choice options, and how do they vary?

- student characteristics
- achievement levels
- school composition
- neighborhood demographics

Hartford Public School zones
Census tracts
Census block groups
Findings from Who Chooses Report 1:

We analyzed RSCO applicants vs non-applicants among Hartford-resident HPS grade 3-7 students in Spring 2012:

Applications not random, but linked to student socioeconomic characteristics that often showed higher participation by more privileged families:
- lower levels by English language learners & special needs
- higher levels by high CMT scores, and living in census areas with higher incomes and owner-occupied housing
3 policies increased public school choice in Hartford:

1) Sheff v O’Neill school desegregation raised interdistrict magnets and Open Choice through RSCO *our focus*
2) State legislature approved public charter schools
3) HPS shifted from neighborhood attendance areas to “all-choice” initiative for district schools

Typical parent of Hartford 6th grader eligible to apply to over 40 district & interdistrict options in metro region

http://SmartChoices.trincoll.edu
Our study linked records across four data silos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reg School Choice Office</th>
<th>CT Dept of Education</th>
<th>Hartford Public Sch</th>
<th>Census Bureau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18,000 city &amp; suburban applications to interdistrict magnets &amp; Open Choice</td>
<td>Public Sch Info System + CMT tests for 180,000 students in region</td>
<td>22,000 student addresses and more test data</td>
<td>American Community Survey 5yr for 100 census block groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John Smith → John Smith
1234567890 → 1234567890
100 Main St. → 100 Main St.
Census 500101
Application Flow Chart (abbreviated) Spring 2012

Hartford-resident HPS Grade 3-7 students = 6675

Applicants to RSCO lottery = 1408 (21%)

Non-applicants to RSCO lottery = 5265 (79%)

+ 2 unmatched student records
### Analysis of Characteristics of RSCO Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Probability of applying</th>
<th>Probability of not applying</th>
<th>Magnitude of difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>no significant diff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Language Learner</th>
<th>Probability of applying</th>
<th>Probability of not applying</th>
<th>Magnitude of difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>89 fewer ELL students applied than expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-ELL</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Analysis of Characteristics of RSCO Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Probability of applying</th>
<th>Probability of not applying</th>
<th>Magnitude of difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Ed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>57 fewer SPED students applied than expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non SPED</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High scoring CT Mastery Test (4-5)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High scoring</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>33 more high scoring students applied than exp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower scoring</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>Probability of applying</td>
<td>of not applying</td>
<td>Magnitude of difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $40k</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>47 more students in upper group applied than exp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $20k</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner occupied home census blk grp</th>
<th>Probability of applying</th>
<th>of not applying</th>
<th>Magnitude of difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 40%</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>74 more students in upper group applied than exp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy considerations:

1) If State wishes to evaluate public school choice, then link RSCO applications to CSDE records and make data available to researchers.

2) If State and Sheff plaintiffs desire more equitable choice participation, establish benchmarks by student characteristics (e.g. ELL, SPED, Income), in addition to the traditional total goal (e.g. 41% Hartford minority students).

3) Possible strategies to achieve equity participation benchmarks:
   - School choice fairs and door-to-door outreach in under-represented areas
   - Magnet themes (e.g. Dual Language) to attract under-represented students
   - Weighted lottery to increase odds for under-represented Hartford areas

4) Explore why patterns exist: Creaming by schools and/or climbing by parents? Support qualitative research to explore what quantitative data does not reveal.
Acknowledgements:

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**Data provided by:** CT Dept of Education, under no-cost contract approved by CT Attorney General, which restricts use of confidential student records for the purpose of this study; Hartford Public Schools

Stay tuned for Report 2 spatial analysis (with maps)

**For more information, contact:** Jack.Dougherty@trincoll.edu