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## WWC QUICK Review

### “Better Schools, Less Crime?”

#### What is the study about?

This study examined the effect of public school choice on adult crime and school-based outcomes. Prior to the 2002–03 school year, the Charlotte–Mecklenberg school district switched from forced desegregation to a district-wide open enrollment lottery. This study focuses on more than 2,000 male students in grades 6–11 who participated in the subset of these admission lotteries in which the assignment process was random.

#### What did the study report?

By comparing the crime records of students who won a middle school lottery to those of students who did not, the study reported that the number of days incarcerated was significantly lower among lottery winners overall and for those in the top risk quintile. Among high school students, the number of felony arrests was significantly lower among lottery winners for those in the top risk quintile, but not across students overall. The study also reported small improvements in attendance and behavioral measures during school, but no change in test scores or graduation rates.

#### How does the WWC rate this study?

This study *meets WWC evidence standards* because it is a randomized controlled trial with low attrition for the outcomes related to adult crime. There is not enough information for the analyses of school-based outcomes to provide a rating at this time. A more thorough review (forthcoming) will confirm whether the analyses of school-based outcomes also *meet WWC evidence standards*.

#### The New Quick Review

In March 2012, the WWC began using a new format for quick reviews to allow for a faster release. When a more complete review is conducted for the study described here, this information will be updated.

#### Handy Definitions

- ▼ *quick review*
- ▼ *study rating*
- ▼ *meets evidence standards*
- ▼ *meets evidence standards with reservations*
- ▼ *does not meet evidence standards*

See the *full glossary* ►

## Citation

Deming, D. J. (2011). Better schools, less crime? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(4), 2063–2115.

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