

Board of Advisors

March 13, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Advisors of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

FROM: Jon Baron

RE: Update – Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

We're pleased to share the latest evidence findings of the Coalition's [Top Tier Evidence](#) initiative, as well as growing national press coverage of evidence-based policy and the Coalition's work across diverse policy areas:

1. **The Coalition's Top Tier Evidence expert [panel](#) has identified New York City's Small Schools of Choice intervention as "Near Top Tier," based on a large randomized trial showing it increased four-year high school graduation with proficiency on state exams by 4-6 percentage points**, at no additional cost compared to traditional high schools. The panel's evidence summary is [posted here](#). Small Schools of Choice are small public high schools, created citywide in mostly high-poverty communities to replace large, low-performing high schools. The small schools compete for students through the city's system of school choice. A large, well-conducted RCT carried out by MDRC found, at the four-year study follow-up, that this intervention produced a 6-10 percentage point increase in the four-year high school graduation rate, and a 4-6 percentage point increase in the rate of four-year graduation with a New York State Regents diploma (requiring proficiency on each of five state Regents exams in various subjects).

The panel found that this intervention meets almost all elements of the Top Tier standard, needing only a replication trial to confirm the initial results and establish that they generalize to other settings and conditions in which the intervention might be implemented.

2. **Recent *NY Times* and *LA Times* articles – many citing the Coalition's work – underscore the need for strong evidence from randomized controlled trials to address critical national problems across a remarkably diverse set of policy areas.** These articles reflect an important longer-term trend in the national press toward greater recognition of the unique value of such studies:

- ["Visiting Nurses, Helping Mothers on the Margins,"](#) Sabrina Tavernise, *New York Times* (front page), March 9, 2015.
- ["Where Terrorism Research Goes Wrong,"](#) Tony Biglan, *New York Times*, March 6, 2015.
- ["Few Health System Studies Use Top Method, Report Says,"](#) Sabrina Tavernise, *New York Times*, February 12, 2015.
- ["The case for evidence-based policymaking in Washington,"](#) Michael Hiltzik, *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2015.

Robert Boruch
University of Pennsylvania

Jonathan Crane
Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

David Ellwood
Harvard University

Deborah Gorman-Smith
University of Chicago

Judith Gueron
MDRC

Ron Haskins
Brookings Institution

Blair Hull
Matlock Capital

Robert Hoyt
Jennison Associates

David Kessler
Former FDA Commissioner

Jerry Lee
Jerry Lee Foundation

Dan Levy
Harvard University

Jodi Nelson
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Howard Rolston
Abt Associates

Isabel Sawhill
Brookings Institution

Martin Seligman
University of Pennsylvania

Robert Shea
Grant Thornton

Robert Solow
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Nicholas Zill
Westat, Inc.

President

Jon Baron
jbaron@coalition4evidence.org
(202) 683-8049

1725 I Street NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006
www.coalition4evidence.org

- “[Helping the Poor in Education: The Power of a Simple Nudge](#),” Susan Dynarski, *New York Times*, January 17, 2015.
- “[For Better Crime Prevention, a Dose of Science](#),” Tina Rosenberg, *New York Times*, January 16, 2015.

We hope this update is helpful. Any thoughts or suggestions you have on our work would be much appreciated.

Jon

Jon Baron
President, Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy
1725 I Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington DC 20006
www.coalition4evidence.org
202-683-8049

The Coalition is grateful to the MacArthur Foundation, William T. Grant Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Overdeck Family Foundation for their funding support for our work.