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:

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

Jon

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