

School Consolidation and Inequality

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Between 1930 and 1970, two-thirds of schools and nine of every ten school districts that existed in the United States were eliminated in a process of consolidation. In this paper, I ask whether the dramatic growth in the size of schools and districts led to a decrease in the variation in student outcomes. Specifically, I examine whether changes in school and district size are associated with inequality in adult wages. Overall, I find evidence that consolidation had significant effects on the variation in adult wages only for students with the lowest level of educational attainment.

Although not the primary focus of the paper, I also find that increases in school term length are consistently associated with reductions in adult wage inequality. My analysis is confined to white males, and the results may not generalize to other groups.