

# **Private high school vouchers, local school market structure, and middle school achievement\***

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the impact of a private high school voucher program on the academic achievement of middle school students in Japan, focusing on regional differences in private school quality. Since 2010, a government-subsidized tuition support system has lowered the cost of private high schools, especially for low-income families. The program raises middle school students' achievement in areas with high-quality private options, particularly in schools with many low-income students. In contrast, in regions where public high schools dominate, the program has little or even negative effects. These results suggest that the voucher program increases students' effort by expanding their perceived opportunities for higher-quality education, highlighting the importance of considering local school quality when designing education policies.

JEL classifications: I22, I21, I28, J24

Keywords: Private school vouchers; Tuition subsidies; Human capital formation; Educational inequality; Local school quality; Local school quality

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