

WWC New Topic Area The Effectiveness of Charter Schools Transcript February 6, 2018

Hello, everyone, and thank you for attending today's webinar, WWC's new topic area on the effectiveness of charter schools, a webinar for decision makers. I will be briefly going through some housekeeping information before we get started. You can make the slides larger on your screen by clicking the bottom right corner of the slides window and dragging. If you have accessed the audio for the webinar through the teleconference line, you may experience a slight delay. If possible, we encourage you to listen to the webinar through your computer or device speakers. We encourage you to submit questions throughout the webinar, using the Q&A tool on the webinar software on your screen. You can ask a question when it comes to mind; you don't have to wait until the question-and-answer session. Because we're recording this, every member of the audience is in listen-only mode. That improves the sound quality of the recording, but it also means that the only way to ask questions is through the question-and-answer tool, so please use that. We've scheduled 60 minutes for this webinar. We will try to answer as many questions as possible. The slide deck and a recording and transcript of the webinar will be available on the WWC website for download. So, with that, let's get started. I'd like to introduce Chris Weiss, senior education research scientist, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education. Chris, you now have the floor.

Thank you. I'm Chris Weiss, I'm the team lead for the What Works Clearinghouse, the Institute of Education Sciences. It's my pleasure to welcome you to this webinar. As you may know, in late July, the What Works Clearinghouse launched its newest topic area, Charter Schools, and in this area, the WWC will explore the impacts of charter schools on students in grades K-12. As part of the launch of the new topic area, we released three intervention reports. Those intervention reports will be the basis of much of the talk this afternoon. We will also spend some time talking about the details of the What Works Clearinghouse's systematic review process. We welcome your questions and are glad you are here. With that, it's my pleasure to pass it to Martha Bleeker of Mathematica Policy Research. Martha?

Great, thank you so much, and thank you all for joining us today. I'm Martha Bleeker, a senior researcher at Mathematica Policy Research and product lead for the What Works Clearinghouse. I'm joined today by my colleague Brian Gill, who is a senior fellow at Mathematica and the content expert for the Charter Schools topic area at the What Works Clearinghouse. During this webinar, we'll provide some background information on the new Charter School topic area, briefly describe the first set of charter school intervention reports, explain how they fit into the larger charter school research base, and discuss plans for future reviews. We will present for about 30 or 40 minutes, then have some time for questions. As a reminder, you can submit your questions using the Q&A tool at any time. You don't have to wait until the question-and-answer session.

Over the past few years, there's been a push for education decision makers to make instructional or curriculum choices using evidence from scientifically-based research. But identifying evidence-based programs and practices can be time-consuming and difficult. Searching for research may return dozens or even hundreds of studies. Even with a lot of time to read all of this research, it can be difficult to identify the high-quality studies that provide the best evidence. The What Works Clearinghouse was established in 2002 to be a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education.

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The Clearinghouse was one of the first investments of the Institute of Education Sciences, which is an independent, nonpartisan entity within the U.S. Department of Education. The WWC claims to identify all relevant rigorous research on a topic, review those studies against What Works Clearinghouse design standards, and then summarize the findings from high-quality research. The WWC's goal is to help busy educators and policymakers efficiently make evidence-based decisions based on the most rigorous research. The Clearinghouse does not directly test or study interventions. Instead, we summarize the evidence for policymakers and educators and can support you in finding and accessing evidence to answer a range of questions.

Today, we will be talking about the WWC's newest topic area that focuses on the effectiveness of charter schools on student academic achievement and other outcomes. The topic area was officially launched a couple of weeks ago with the release of three intervention reports, each focused on charter school networks. These reports reviewed and described research on the *Knowledge is Power Program* or *KIPP*, *Green Dot* public schools and the *Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy* charter schools. Later in this presentation, we'll show you how to access these reports on the WWC website, and then my colleague Brian will describe each charter school network and walk through the findings from each of the reports.

Before we get to the reports, we thought it would be useful to provide some background information on why the WWC decided to launch a new topic area focused on the effectiveness of charter schools.

Charter schools are a relatively recent development to serve a large number of students. Although they did not exist 25 years ago, there are now nearly 7,000 charter schools in the United States that serve nearly three million children across 44 states. Federal grant programs, including the competitive Race to the Top Grants and School Improvement Grants, as well as the Department of Education's Charter School Program, have supported expanding successful charter school models to reach even more students. In addition, the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, requires that schools and districts implement interventions that are evidence-based. The continuing growth of charter schools and these ESSA requirements suggest the need for a systematic review of the literature and evidence on the effectiveness of charter schools to help inform state and district policy. As a result, the WWC established a Charter Schools topic area review team consisting of a group of WWC certified reviewers, methodologists, and a charter school content expert, Brian Gill, who is joining us today.

Prior to performing a literature search or reviewing any studies, the Charter School review team collaborated with IES to develop a review protocol for the topic area. This review protocol includes key research questions, which are shown on the slide here, key definitions, eligible populations, and outcomes, and is used in conjunction with the *WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook* to guide the literature search and study review process for the area. As I mentioned, the key research questions from the review protocol are shown here. The first research question is related to the impact of charter schools on student's academic achievement. This can include student test scores and assessments in language arts, math, science, and social studies. The team is also interested in the effectiveness of charter schools on nonacademic outcomes such as student attendance, their experience of disciplinary actions, student social-emotional competence, educational attainment, and earnings in adulthood. In addition to looking at the outcomes of students within charter schools, the review protocol also includes a research question focused on the systemic impact of the expansion of the charter network in a community on the achievement and educational attainment for students in the traditional non-charter public schools.

In addition to the key research questions, the charter school review protocol also lays out two types of interventions that may be the focus of reviews. First are programs, which include a school or group of schools implementing a charter school model. Examples of interest here include both independent charter schools and groups of charter schools that are organized into charter management organizations or charter networks. The three intervention reports that we will discuss today are all focused on charter networks. Policies are also eligible for review. A policy is a named condition, system, or set of formal rules that affects schools and students. Policies may be set by federal, state, or local governments or by the organization providing services. Examples of policies include legalization of charter schools and requirements for the granting or renewal of charter school authorization.

Prior to selecting specific interventions for review, the topic area team conducted a review of the charter school literature using the WWC *Procedures Handbook* and review protocol to guide the process. As described in the *Procedures Handbook*, the systematic and comprehensive searches done by the WWC include well-specified search terms and processes and are used to identify studies that may be relevant across a wide range of available databases, websites, and other sources. The search also includes submissions from intervention distributors and developers, researchers, and the public to the WWC help desk. Citations gathered through the search process undergo a preliminary screening to determine whether the studies meet the criteria established in the review protocol related to factors like study design and eligible populations and outcomes. In particular, studies must use one of several rigorous research designs, including designs such as randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, and regression discontinuity designs. Most of the eligible charter school research we uncovered in our literature search fit into the first two buckets here, RCTs and QEDs. While RCTs rely on random assignment to form intervention and comparison groups, QEDs form these groups using methods other than random assignment, such as matching based on baseline characteristics of schools or students.

The Charter School literature search resulted in 239 eligible studies that fell into three main groups or buckets of interventions. The first bucket was schools organized into networks or CMOs, the second bucket was charter schools within a given city or metro area, and the third group was charter schools within a state. The remaining references were deemed ineligible for review because they did not include an evaluation of an intervention's effectiveness, did not use an eligible research design, or fell outside of the Charter School topic area protocol because, for example, they were studies that did not measure relevant outcomes. In collaboration with IES, the topic area team decided to start their review effort with a focus on networks and CMOs. So, the first bucket on the slide. Charter schools within a network or CMO generally follow a common set of practices and procedures, whereas a single geographic area generally includes different types of charter schools with different practices, procedures, and student populations. Thus, networks and CMOs are generally more well-defined than a group of charter schools within a metro area or state. This focus on well-defined interventions is more consistent with the approach taken in other more established WWC topic areas. The topic area team conducted intervention-specific literature searches on all of the networks and CMOs uncovered in the initial comprehensive search to inform the prioritization of intervention reports. Studies gathered were then screened against the parameters specified in the review protocol in order to identify the studies eligible for WWC review.

The results of this literature search and screening process showed that *KIPP* charter schools, *Green Dot* public schools, and *Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academies* were the three networks with the most potential eligible research. The studies for each of these interventions were assigned to WWC-certified reviewers who made a final careful assessment on study eligibility, and then used the WWC *Standards Handbook* to assess whether each eligible study met WWC standards. During this review process, any

uncertainties or discrepancies between reviewers were brought to a lead methodologist on the Charter School team. It is important to note here that any studies conducted by Mathematica Policy Research were reviewed by certified reviewers from different organizations. After reviews were finalized, the evidence from studies that met the WWC group design standards were summarized in intervention reports.

Now, we are going to take a look at the first three intervention reports released by the Charter School topic area team. I'll start by showing you how to access the three reports on the WWC website, and then Brian will walk through the findings from each of the reports.

When you first go to the What Works Clearinghouse website, you'll find a chalkboard at the top with a variety of topics. Selecting one of these topics will take you to Find What Works, which is an advanced search function that allows you to look at the evidence of the effectiveness of interventions reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. You can find evidence related to charter schools by selecting the Charter School icon here, as indicated by the green arrow.

Once you select Charter Schools, you'll see this page, which lists the interventions reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse that summarize related evidence. Each row here represents one intervention and lists the grade levels of students that were included in the research for that intervention. Interventions with evidence covering more outcome domains or based on a larger body of research are sorted at the top of the list on this page. If you are interested in seeing the *KIPP* intervention report, you would click on that report to get more information.

Clicking on the *KIPP* intervention name will bring you to this page, which includes information about all of the research on *KIPP* that has been reviewed by the WWC. In this case, there is only one product related to this intervention, which is the intervention report that was released by the Charter Schools team in January 2018. If there were other WWC products that focused on *KIPP*, there would be separate green tabs present here. This page includes a link to the full intervention report, as indicated by the green arrow. It also includes a high-level description of the intervention at the top and a table with information from the report underneath. This table includes the outcome domains included in the research, the WWC effectiveness ratings for each domain, the number of studies that met WWC standards, information about the grade level and the number of students included in those studies, and a WWC improvement index for each domain. The improvement index is an alternate presentation of the effect size and reflects the change in an average individual's percentile rank that can be expected if the individual is given the intervention. A positive improvement index favors the intervention group and a negative number favors the comparison group. Now, I will turn it over to Brian to walk through each of the intervention reports starting with *KIPP*.

Thanks so much, Martha, and thanks, Chris, for the introduction as well. Many of you may be familiar with *KIPP* because it is the largest network of charter schools in the country, now operating more than 200 of them across quite a lot of different states and cities. The first *KIPP* schools opened over twenty years ago in Houston and New York City and since then the network has grown dramatically. Like other charter schools, it's funded through public funds. In addition, *KIPP*, many *KIPP* schools, get quite a bit of supplemental funding from foundations and individuals to add to their services. *KIPP* has a number of characteristics that are associated with the schools it operates, which largely serve low income and minority students in the communities where they operate. They serve students across pre-K–12 at this point, having started initially in middle schools. The students are admitted based on a lottery in cases where there are more applicants than they have seats available, and *KIPP* is an example of what some

people have called “no excuses” charter schools. I’m not sure that *KIPP* would choose that term itself, but in any case, they have high expectations for both academics and for behavior and have high expectations with respect to both their students and their staff. That’s where the “no excuses” term comes from. That means, for example, that students, parents, and teaching staff at *KIPP* sign a pledge committing to excellence that describes the expectations for things like attendance, homework, student behavior, parental support, and teacher’s preparation and availability.

So, what did we find when we took a look the studies of *KIPP*? The Clearinghouse identified six eligible studies that investigated the effects of *KIPP*, and four of those six met the group design standards for the Clearinghouse. I should acknowledge up front, as Martha mentioned, Mathematica staff did not conduct the reviews for studies that had been led by Mathematica folks and, in fact, three of the four studies of *KIPP* that were included in here were conducted by colleagues of ours at Mathematica, so those reviews were conducted by people outside of Mathematica to ensure the independence and objectivity of the reviews. As you can see here, across the four studies, we have evidence on five different student outcome domains for *KIPP*. Student achievement in four different subjects, not only reading and math, but also science and social studies, and then also, student progression. What you can also see here is for the four academic subjects where test scores were the outcomes examined, the *KIPP* effects were found to be consistently positive. Positive effects in reading and math and science and social studies with two to four studies examining each of those outcomes. Only positive results on the improvement index. In contrast with one study that looked at student progression, the Clearinghouse found no discernible effects. It’s worth noting here that these results, when you look at the test scores, are pretty substantial, if you compare them to the literature on the effects of schoolwide interventions generally. It’s relatively rare to see schoolwide interventions produce effects that are this consistently positive, but it’s also worth noting that the literature is in some sense incomplete here, largely because we need to learn a lot more about long-term impacts of *KIPP*. As you can see, again, we’ve got only one study looking at student progression and no clear results of that one. It will be important to know in the future whether these positive test score impacts translate into demonstrable improvements in student’s life chances. That said, the early evidence from the test scores is very favorable.

Turning to *Green Dot*. *Green Dot* is another charter school network. It’s not as large as *KIPP*, and there have not been as many studies, as I will talk about in a minute. *Green Dot* is unusual among charter schools in a couple of respects. One of those is that it operates, as the first bullet indicates, both startup of charter schools and schools that were pre-existing public schools that were turned over to *Green Dot* and converted to charter status. *KIPP* schools and most other charter schools are schools that started up from scratch. So *Green Dot*, among a few other charter school operators, has additionally decided that it wants to take on the challenge of turning around typically public schools that were chronically low performing prior to being run by *Green Dot*. The model is intended to create small community high schools, emphasizes a number of different principles related to teacher training and support, autonomous school leadership, promoting a college-going culture, providing comprehensive supports that go beyond just academic supports, engaging parents, and then trying to replicate in similar schools. In point number six, here is the second key difference that *Green Dot* has with many other charter schools, which is that it’s teachers are unionized. That’s not typical in most charter schools. As with *KIPP* and most other charter schools, the funding comes largely from public per person expenditures. However, in some instances may have additional philanthropic support particularly for some of the turnaround operations. So, let’s turn to the findings there.

As I mentioned, we found only one eligible study that investigated the effects of *Green Dot* on academic achievement and progression of high school students. That looked specifically at a group of *Green Dot*

public schools that had been formed by breaking up a pre-existing public high school into a set of smaller schools. This is a case where it was a turnaround school rather than a brand-new charter school or, I should say, a turnaround set of schools, since they converted one into several. And, we took a look at this study and report results here across four different outcomes domains, math and English language arts test scores, as well as student progression and attendance. Here as you can see, the extent of evidence is less because there's only one study, that's why it's so small on the extent of evidence column here, but the results are consistently positive in that one study. *Green Dot* appears to be producing at least potentially positive effects on all four of these outcomes: math achievement, English language achievement, progression across grades, and attendance. So that's *Green Dot*.

We have, unfortunately, not much to say about the *Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy*. Although the Clearinghouse identified three studies that looked at the effects of the *Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy* schools, one of them did not have an eligible study design, and the other two, as it turned out, were out of scope because they were looking only at an individual charter school. *Promise Academy* includes, in fact, more than one charter school, and because the aim of this review was to focus on the organizational model, as in the case of *KIPP* and the case of *Green Dot*, where we wanted to take a look at the effects of the approach in general across multiple schools, that meant that these studies of a single *Harlem Children's Zone* school turned out not to be eligible. So, this is not to imply anything negative about the schools themselves, but the studies turned out to be ineligible for review by the Clearinghouse.

Let me talk briefly about what the Charter School topic area might address in future work, assuming Chris and his colleagues at the Institute of Education Sciences decide it is a good idea to go in this direction or these directions, I should say. So, we talked about -- Martha talked earlier about several different ways that the Clearinghouse could look at evidence on charter school effectiveness, and we clearly have not addressed all of them in these first three intervention reports. One way in which the future work could proceed would be to look at evidence focused on charter schools in a particular geographic area, which would typically mean a city or a state. As many of you probably know, there have been studies done that look at charter schools across geographic areas rather than focusing on networks like *KIPP* or *Green Dot* or *Harlem Children's Zone*, and those studies could be well worth examining by the Clearinghouse. The area could also go on to continue to look at research on branded charter school models like the ones we looked at here. There are, of course, many more charter school networks and charter management organizations out there that could be eligible to be studied, and those could be included in future work in the Charter School area. Then, finally, it's worth mentioning that we have not looked at the third research question in the review protocol yet, and this one is one that is of great interest to a lot of policymakers across the country, which is: what is the systemic impact of the expansion of the charter sector in a community? In this case, not on the students who are in the charter schools, but on the students who remain in conventional public schools, in district-operated schools. As you probably know, one of the key areas of debate among policymakers and educators about charter schools is not just about whether they are doing a good job of serving their own students, but about the sort of effects, either positive or negative, that they might have on students in conventional public schools. So, to the extent that the Clearinghouse can find studies that would be eligible for review that look at those larger systemic outcomes, those could also be the focus of attention in the future.

Let me just summarize briefly what Martha and I have talked about. The Clearinghouse's new topic area on charter schools evaluates the research on their effectiveness, focusing on student academic achievement and other student outcomes. I would hope that we will have lots of additional student

outcomes to examine in the future beyond just the test scores. It provides information to support educators and policymakers to try to make evidence-based decisions. Like the other products of the Clearinghouse, the Charter School area summarizes evidence in intervention reports that are intended to be accessible to a broad audience, and we have the first three of those out now for all of you to see. I hope you enjoyed those. You can stay connected with the Clearinghouse not only with the Charter Schools area, but everything that the What Works Clearinghouse is doing by going to the Find What Works page by signing up for our email list, connecting with us on Facebook or Twitter, or sending a message to the Clearinghouse Help Desk. Now, this is great, we finished in half an hour, so we've got plenty of time for your questions. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Elias Walsh, to moderate the Q&A period. Thanks, everybody.

Thank you, Brian, Martha, and Chris. It's my pleasure to moderate the question-and-answer portion of this webinar. We will do our best to address the questions you have for us. If you have not done so, you may type in a question now using the Q&A tool in your webinar software. We have a few questions here already. Martha, I will start with you. Will the WWC update these intervention reports as new studies are released?

Yes, that's a good question. We do periodically update the findings from past intervention reports, especially when we know new research has become available to add to our evidence base, but I think the current plan right now for the Charter School topic area is actually to move on and summarize evidence for additional interventions rather than focus on updating these right now.

Thank you. Brian, the next one is for you. How do you know the positive results from *KIPP* and *Green Dot* aren't just a result of the fact they serve self-selected groups of students?

That's a question that really goes to the importance of the research methods in these studies. I think that, that kind of question is one of the reasons that it's important to have the Clearinghouse doing this sort of review. It captures the fact that studying charter schools is a challenge because they are, by definition, schools of choice. Kids are not assigned there based on where they live. They choose to be there, or their parents choose to send them there. For us researchers, that creates a challenge, because those kids who have chosen to be there could be different from other kids who stay in conventional public schools and who have not made a choice. We have to be able to design studies that can distinguish the effect of the school from whatever the effect of the kid and the family and everything that the kid is bringing accounts for. That's why the Clearinghouse is looking for studies that are rigorous in identifying comparison groups of students who are good matches for the students in the charter schools. The studies we looked at did that in one of two ways. Either they were quasi-experimental studies where they identified kids who look similar to the charter kids in all observable respects, in terms of race and ethnicity and poverty and, most importantly, their prior achievement levels, and used them as a comparison group. Or even better, in the case of the one study that met standards without reservations, the study took advantage of the fact that the charter schools were using randomized admissions lotteries to admit their students and the comparison group--there is an experimental control group who also wanted to get into those charter schools and only didn't due to the luck of the draw. Basically, we can account for selection--or I should say, the researchers who did these studies accounted for selection--either by coming up with a comparison group that matched the kids in terms of their previous test scores and other characteristics, or identified an experimental control group of students who were like the charter students in all respects, except that they did not win the admissions lottery.

Thanks, Brian. Martha, you discussed how the eligible interventions in this topic area include charter networks and charter management organizations. Are the interventions of interest for the WWC the individual charter schools, or is it more focused on the systems of charter schools?

That's really good question, and it's one that the topic area team thought a lot about when they were first starting to put together their review protocol and look at studies and try to figure out what interventions to focus on, and I think the answer is that it could be either. This first set of intervention reports we released were really focused on the charter networks, so groups of charter schools, and so there, we wanted to make sure that we captured studies that were not just focused on one charter school within a network, but that were really representative of that network as a whole. Which is why we ended up not finding a couple of the *HCZ* studies to be eligible. I think moving on in the future, it's possible we might decide to focus an intervention report on a standalone charter school—this has not come up yet as something that we're going to do, but it's a possibility. So, if that were the case, then the intervention report would focus on that one school.

Thanks, Martha. Brian, is there research-based evidence of strategies that charter school authorizers can employ which is most impactful for the promotion of high-quality charter schools?

That's a great question, and it's a really hard one. So, that is not something, unfortunately, that the Clearinghouse is likely to be able to address in its standard intervention report. The reason for that is because strategies that—or curricula or any particular characteristics that charter schools use—that might make them more effective, they're not randomly assigned to the charter schools. They're all part of the package that whoever the designer of the charter school is came up with. Even if we have a study that is really rigorous in terms of its ability to make causal inferences, even if we have say in the best case a randomized experimental study, such as one that relies on the admissions lottery to identify a comparison group, that will give us a really great aspect, really good rigorous measure of the impact of the school or schools, but it can't tell us what specific characteristics of those schools are responsible for those impacts. Now, that said, of course it's still a really important question, and that's one of the reasons, for example, that the Clearinghouse also has, in addition to intervention reports, also has practice guides in which it brings together experts in the field to address questions like this one about, well, what are the strategies that are likely to matter? There isn't currently a plan to have a practice guide related to charter schools or charter school authorization more specifically, but it's certainly something that the Clearinghouse could do in the future. In the meantime, the only thing I would say is that there have been a few scholars who have tried to look at this and at least try to identify, because it's possible to at least identify some characteristics of schools that are more likely to be effective than others, and so, if you're, interested I would suggest taking a look at papers by Will Dobbie and Roland Fryer, for example. There is another paper by my colleague, Phil Gleason, and a few others that have tried to see, are there characteristics of charter schools that are least associated with better positive impacts on students?

Thanks, Brian. Martha, why don't any of the reports include the other outcomes mentioned in your research questions?

That's a good question. I assume it's because the studies did not actually report outcomes in those domains, so that's why they're not included in the report. It's possible that they might have included outcomes or measured outcomes on those domains, and when our reviewers reviewed the studies, they determined that those contrasts just did not meet What Works Clearinghouse standards, so they weren't appropriate to report on in our report.

I will chime in on that, just to say that it is a reflection of the larger literature and not just for charter schools in particular, but for most education interventions, is that there are a lot more studies that look at test scores than look at other longer-term outcomes, largely because it's easy to get the information on test scores. Also, because you don't have to wait as long, but there is, in fact, a slowly growing literature on long-term outcomes associated with charter schools, and so I am quite optimistic that we will see more of those included in Clearinghouse reviews in the future.

Brian, somewhat related to an earlier question but a little different here, I guess. You have any thoughts on resources that someone could use to better understand some of the hypotheses about systemic impacts of charters on communities and non-charter students, and the possible mechanisms behind those impacts?

That's a good question. Yeah, I think one of the reasons that we thought it was really important to put this question of systemic impacts onto the radar screen for the Clearinghouse to examine, I hope, in the future, is because there are opposing hypotheses about the effects that charter schools could have on students who remain in conventional public schools. It's clear that, that really is an important part of the policy and political debate as well. For good reason, because you can certainly, as a matter of theory, you can tell two quite different stories about how charter schools might affect kids in conventional public schools. The negative story, the worrisome one, is the possibility that charter schools could drain resources from public schools, either in terms of dollars or in terms of motivated families, and that students who remain behind might end up worse off, so the mechanism there is not hard to imagine. But theorists who are far more optimistic about the effects of charter schools tend to argue that they may induce some healthy competition to conventional public schools, and that by giving public schools some additional motivation to do things to improve their performance and keep the students they've got -- that could actually be a good thing for students who remain in conventional public schools. Of course, it's also possible that both stories could be true in different contexts and in different communities and with different kinds of funding systems. So, one thing I should acknowledge is it's much harder to study those systemic effects, those indirect systemic effects, than it is to study the direct effects on the kids who actually enroll in charter schools. You can't take advantage of admissions lotteries, for example, to get your comparison group because the whole idea is that the kids who don't go are the ones being affected. That said, there have been a number of studies that have tried to look at this, so I think it will be great to have the Clearinghouse take a look at those studies and find out if any of them might meet standards and give us a better sense of whether those, which of those theoretical stories is more likely to be empirically true.

Thanks, Brian. A couple questions came in about the effects of charter schools on special education students in particular. Do the intervention reports that were released include studies that have rigorous evidence on the effects on special education students?

My understanding is that the special education students are included in those studies to the extent that they are part of the population served by the charter schools. I don't believe that any of the studies had large enough samples, specifically of special education students, to assess whether there were differential effects on those students. That's something that would certainly merit more attention in the future.

Yeah, I will chime in there, and just also mentioned that the Charter School review protocol has a list of subgroups of students that the WWC will focus on if a study reports findings for those groups of

students and special education students are included in the review protocol as one of those subgroups. But Brian is correct, that the intervention reports did not report on any findings in those subgroups based on the studies that were reviewed.

Martha, do you ever contact an author to let them know you are reviewing their studies?

Yeah, that's a good question. Generally, we don't reach out to authors to let them know that we are going to review their studies, but we do contact authors if we are in the process of reviewing a study and we have a question and need some additional information in order to complete our review. In the past, we contacted authors to request things like sample size information, or maybe if we needed some additional information about their random assignment procedures, something like that would be a reason why we might reach out to an author. If we do that, any information that we get back from the author that we actually end up using in the intervention report, we make sure that we make that information available to the public, so everyone has access to that information, and we also note that in the intervention report, so it's clear that we contacted the authors, got additional information, and here's the additional information that we received. We will clearly document that in the report if that happens.

Thanks, Martha. We will give folks just one last minute here to submit a question if you haven't already. I think we've hit on all of the -- there's one that just came in right now. A question about the special education students again, and I'm not sure we have the information available to know this about these studies, but I will ask the question anyway, just in case. Did the special education students who may have been present in these schools take the same assessments as the general education students? I suspect we don't know the answer to that because these studies did not focus on special education population. So, we may just not know the answer to that question based on these studies. Brian, is that correct?

Yes. It's a good question. My guess would be that these studies would have been -- as I'm sure you know, some special education students take the same assessments as regular ed students and some take other assessments, depending on what specific disability they've got. My guess is that the ones who were included in the study would be the subset of special education students who were taking the same assessments as the regular ed students, because otherwise, there is not likely to be enough data available for the study to include the small groups taking the alternative assessments.

Great. Well I think that was our last question for today. I will wrap us up and say "thank you" to our presenters, and thank you to all of you attending and the great questions that you had, and until the next release of charter school reports, thank you very much.

This concludes the webcast. The recording will be available approximately 1 day after the webcast and can be accessed using the same audience link that was sent to you earlier. You can submit feedback to the team through the contact us form on our website, whatworks.ed.gov. Thank you, and have a great day.