

Preparing for Local or Global Jobs? Local Labor Markets, High School Course-Taking, and College Enrollment

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This study investigates the relationship between the occupational structure of the local labor market, school course offerings, and student course-taking and college-going. Results indicate that schools serving communities with higher concentrations of low-wage service and blue-collar jobs devote a larger share of their curricula to vocational courses related to local jobs and a smaller share to AP/IB courses, net of other factors. Students in these communities take more vocational courses and are less likely to take college-preparatory math and AP/IB courses, partly due to course offerings at their schools. Students in communities with higher concentrations of low-wage service/blue-collar workers are also less likely to attend a four-year college, partially as a result of the less academically rigorous school curricula and course-taking in these areas. Results indicate that the greatest disparities in advanced academic course-taking and four-year college enrollment across local economic contexts exist among high-achieving students.

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