

## UMUT ÖZEK

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### FIELDS OF CONCENTRATION

Primary Fields: Economics of Education, Public Economics, Applied Econometrics.  
Secondary Fields: Game Theory, Mechanism/Market Design.

### EDUCATION

Ph.D. Candidate in Economics, University of Florida, Degree Expected 2009.  
M.A. in Economics, University of Colorado at Denver, 2005.  
B.S. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (with Honors), Middle East Technical  
University, Ankara, Turkey, 2003.

### WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Effects of Open Enrollment on School Choice and Student Outcomes”

### MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

“Games of School Choice under Uncertainty” (Under revision for re-submission  
to the Journal of Public Economic Theory)

“Equal Treatment as a Means of Evaluating Public School Assignment  
Mechanisms”

### TEACHING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2008-2009: Lecturer, undergraduate Public Economics (Fall-2008, Spring-2009),  
University of Florida. Course Website:  
[http://plaza.ufl.edu/umutozek/teaching\\_files/ECO4504.htm](http://plaza.ufl.edu/umutozek/teaching_files/ECO4504.htm).  
2005-2007: Research Assistant to Damon Clark, University of Florida.  
2005-2006: Teaching Assistant to Damon Clark, University of Florida.  
2004-2005: Teaching Assistant to Naci H. Mocan, University of Colorado at Denver.  
2003-2005: Research Assistant to Naci H. Mocan, University of Colorado at Denver.

### PRESENTATIONS

November 2008, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, “Equal Treatment as  
a Means of Evaluating Public School Assignment Mechanisms”.

May 2008, University of Florida, “Equal Treatment as a Means of Evaluating Public School Assignment Mechanisms”.

April 2008, American Education Finance Association Annual Meeting, “Games of School Choice under Uncertainty”.

October 2007, University of Florida, “Games of School Choice under Uncertainty”.

#### HONORS AND AWARDS

August 2008, *Robert F. Lanzillotti Prize*, awarded for the best second year paper, Department of Economics, University of Florida (received jointly with Celeste K. Carruthers).

August 2008, has been chosen in a competition among young economists worldwide to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Winners of the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, Germany, 20-23 August 2008.

July 2008, *International Lockhart Travel Award*, awarded based upon the achievements of the Ph.D. Candidate to cover the expenses of an international scholarly conference by the Department of Economics, University of Florida.

April 2008, *Walter-Lanzillotti Dissertation Award*, awarded based upon the achievements of the Ph.D. Candidate to promote outstanding research in public policy by the Robert F. Lanzillotti Public Policy Research Center, University of Florida (received jointly with Celeste K. Carruthers).

October 2007, *Lockhart Travel Award*, awarded based upon the achievements of the Ph.D. Candidate to cover the expenses of a national scholarly conference by the Department of Economics, University of Florida.

September 2005, *Adell & Hancock Scholarship*, Institute of International Education.

September 2004, *Hsiao Merit Scholarship*, awarded to the best M.A. student in Economics by the Department of Economics, University of Colorado at Denver.

#### REFEREE AND REVIEW EXPERIENCE

Referee: Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Education Finance and Policy.

#### REFERENCES

David N. Figlio  
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## DISSERTATION

Title: “Three Essays on School Choice: the Case of Open Enrollment Programs”.  
Dissertation Committee: David N. Figlio (chair), Lawrence Kenny, Richard Romano.

Open enrollment programs such as inter-district and intra-district school choice, which allow parents to send their children to public schools outside of the neighborhood they reside, have become increasingly popular in the United States during the last two decades. As of 2005, 27 states have passed legislation mandating school districts to implement intra-district school choice, and 20 states have adopted legislation mandating the school districts to participate in the inter-district choice program of their state.

The objective of this dissertation is twofold. First, I look into the empirical aspect of open enrollment programs by analyzing their impact on households’ public school choice behavior and student outcomes. Second, I examine the theoretical aspect by evaluating different assignment mechanisms that are commonly used to implement such programs. The findings presented in this dissertation might provide useful insights for policy-makers and researchers in the design of new public school choice programs.

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

### **“The Effects of Open Enrollment on School Choice and Student Outcomes”**

This paper analyzes households’ response to the introduction of intra-district school choice in the form of open enrollment and examines the impact on student test scores using the recent school-choice policy change in Pinellas County Public Schools, one of the largest school districts in the United States. The results indicate that households react strongly to the incentives created by such programs leading to significant increases in the rate of students who ‘opt-out’ of their ‘default schools’ and the percentage of students who transfer to another public school without changing residences. However, I find no significant benefit of transferring and that those who opt-out of their default public schools often perform significantly worse on standardized tests in the first year following the transfer than those who stay. The results further suggest that the short-run detrimental effects of transferring are stronger for students transferring closer to the terminal grade of the school level, and weaker for ‘disadvantaged’ students, who typically constitute the proposed target of school choice programs. Such detrimental effects persist during the second year after the transfer.

### **“Equal Treatment as a Means of Evaluating Public School Assignment Mechanisms”**

The “equal protection clause” of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment applied to school choice mechanisms implies that students with the same expressed public school preferences and in public schools’ same priority categories (e.g., residing within a walk zone) must be treated equally. A strict application would require that such students get the same school

assignments. When capacity constraints result in a scarcity of slots at schools, a weaker application would require that if two students who are in the same priority category for a given school rank that school as their first choices with all other choices equal, such students have the same probability of attending that public school. Generalizing this argument, this paper introduces a new criterion to evaluate public school assignment mechanisms and shows that all of the ‘strategy-proof’ mechanisms proposed in the recent literature as replacements for the “Boston Mechanism” fail to satisfy this weak application of equal protection, which is satisfied by the Boston Mechanism. After demonstrating this result, I go on to show that one of these alternatives namely the Top-trading Cycles Mechanism is worse yet in the following sense. Given two equivalent students, the latter mechanism might assign the lottery loser to the desired school while assigning the one who wins the lottery to a less desired school. The findings in this paper might provide an explanation for the persistence of the Boston mechanism in most of the school districts using variants of this mechanism.

**“Games of School Choice under Uncertainty”  
(Revise and resubmit from the Journal of Public Economic Theory)**

This paper examines the Nash equilibrium characteristics of the preference revelation game induced by the Boston mechanism under the informational circumstances that arise in major school districts using this mechanism in the U.S. The results indicate that three significant findings of the previous literature fail to hold under the real-world informational setting due to the uncertainty created by the lotteries used in tie-breaking. First, under this setting, the set of Nash equilibrium outcomes under the Boston mechanism do not necessarily correspond to the set of stable assignments under students’ true preferences. Second, switching to one of the alternative mechanisms called the student-optimal stable mechanism, such as in the recent transition in Boston, may result in efficiency losses in practice. Third, assuming that there is at least one sincere student who always reveals public school preferences truthfully, a strategic student who plays best response might weakly prefer the student-optimal stable mechanism to the Boston mechanism. An important policy implication is that the findings of the previous literature can not be used as arguments for or against replacing the Boston mechanism in these school districts.