

# **The outflow of high-ability students from regular schools and its long-term impact on those left behind<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

Early tracking school systems, which stream student by ability, are considered a trigger of widening inequality in education. However, more homogenous class composition resulting from ability tracking seem to improve efficiency of teaching and learning. Literature on peer effects shows contradictory findings about these two counteracting effects. This paper contributes to the discussion of the efficacy of ability tracking by examining the effects of the outflow of high-ability students after primary education on the long-term educational outcomes and behaviour of their peers who remain in regular classes. Exploiting a 2009 school reform in Slovakia which postponed tracking by one year, we show that the outflow of high-performing peers results in a weak negative long-run effect on non-tracked student's math scores and late arrivals at school, and more persistent negative effects on out-of-school study time.

**JEL codes:** I21, I24, I28

**Key words:** early-tracking school system, peer effects, gender effects, Slovak school reform

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