

# FEWER SCHOOL DAYS, MORE INEQUALITY

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## Abstract

This paper examines how the intensity of compulsory education affects the time use and academic achievement of children with different socioeconomic backgrounds. The impact is identified off the school-day reduction of Japan in 2002 that resulted when all Saturdays were set as public-school holidays. An analysis of time diaries and test scores reveals that the socioeconomic gradient of 9<sup>th</sup> graders' study time becomes 80% steeper and the socioeconomic gradient of academic achievements of 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders becomes 20-30% steeper after the school-day reduction. Intensive compulsory education contributes to equalizing the academic performances of children with different socioeconomic backgrounds.

JEL Classification Code: I24, I28

Key Words: Compulsory Education, Inequality, Socioeconomic Gradient.

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