Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S1043-951X(18)30043-9
Reference: CHIECO 1165

To appear in: China Economic Review

Received date: 28 March 2017
Revised date: 2 April 2018
Accepted date: 3 April 2018

Please cite this article as: Song, Y., Intended and Unintended Effects of Student Performance Measurement Reform in China, China Economic Review (2018), doi:10.1016/j.chieco.2018.04.002

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Intended and Unintended Effects of Student Performance Measurement Reform in China

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April 8, 2018

Abstract
In the past few decades, the Chinese Ministry of Education has promoted “suzhi jiaoyu” (quality education) reforms. However, little is known about their impact. This paper evaluates an important component of the reforms that replaces using total scores with a letter grade system in high school admissions. I find that this change in student performance measurement achieved its intended goal of balancing learning across subjects but hindered high achievers with imbalanced performance. This paper also discusses how the measurement reform influenced the gender gap in achievements.

Keywords: Quality education; student performance assessment; education policy; incentives; gender gap.

JEL Classification Numbers: I21, I28.

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†Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Ian Morrall, Ayse Sapci, Lily Ling Yang, two anonymous referees, and the editor for helpful comments.
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