

Is Entering an Elite School a Goal or a Start?  
The Effect of Ordinal Rank on Academic Achievement and College Quality

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**Abstract**

Using administrative data from one of the most selective secondary schools in Japan, this paper shows that students' relative academic position within class affect student' subsequent outcomes. The performance of their first exam at the school has a significant positive effect not only on their subsequent test scores but also on the quality of the college by which they are accepted after school. This may explain why students with a lower rank based on the exams in their early days of school life remain low achievers in later school years, referred to as the “deep-sea-fish” phenomenon.

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