

Optimizing for Distributional Goals in School Choice Problems

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Abstract

Using data from Boston Public Schools, I investigate the tension between three goals of school choice: student welfare, encouraging neighborhood schools, and diversity within schools. I develop a novel framework for computing the optimal match for any convex combination of these goals. I find that one can make significant gains across all three metrics relative to the status quo outcome generated by the Gale-Shapley algorithm. I also find there are modest tradeoffs between the goals, so one can simultaneously increase welfare and school diversity while encouraging neighborhood schools. I close by discussing new menus-and-quotas mechanisms that implement the improved matches.