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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
September 2024

Good afternoon,

This season marks the return to school for many students, teachers, and school staff across the country. Following prolonged disruptions to learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, accelerating learning remains a high priority for the new school year. Math achievement in US schools has long been a concern, and achievement disparities between low-income students and their peers that were exacerbated by Covid-19 interruptions continue to persist.

A robust body of existing evidence demonstrates high-intensity tutoring as a proven strategy to accelerate student learning; however, it is also resource-intensive. With federal relief funding ending soon and limited resources in schools and districts, how can we continue to bring effective strategies to classrooms to help students at scale?

Many practitioners and researchers are eager to leverage emerging education technologies to combat tutor shortages, demands on classroom teachers, and the financial costs associated with in-person, high-intensity tutoring. J-PAL's education technology review paper found that computer-assisted learning has shown promise in improving learning outcomes, particularly in math. A recent randomized evaluation by J-PAL affiliated professor Phil Oreopoulos (University of Toronto), J-PAL invited researcher Chloe Gibbs (Notre Dame), and coauthors assessed the impact of providing coaching to teachers implementing Khan Academy's computer-assisted learning program on student math performance. Read more about the evaluation below.

Meanwhile, J-PAL North America is supporting the Learning Engineering Virtual Institute (LEVI) to evaluate learning products that harness the potential of AI and machine learning. Over the past year, J-PAL North America has hosted trainings on evaluation in ed tech, provided technical evaluation assistance to LEVI teams , and matched ed-tech product teams with researchers in our network. We are excited to continue our involvement with this community to produce evidence on the next generation of learning solutions that reduce teacher burden and accelerate student learning. Read more below about the pilot funding awarded by J-PAL North America to support the LEVI teams.

In this month's newsletter, we also feature a new review paper on interventions to improve early childhood learning outcomes and a blog post on strategies to increase SNAP take up. If you're interested in learning more or getting involved with LEVI, please don't hesitate to

reach out.

Sincerely,
Cat Darrow
Associate Director of Research, J-PAL North America

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J-PAL North America funds five ed-tech pilot projects as part of the Learning Engineering Virtual Institute

J-PAL North America is supporting five pilot studies conducted by Learning Engineering Virtual Institute grantees, with the goal of informing future full scale randomized evaluations. J-PAL is funding University of Ghana (Rori), University of Florida, University of Texas (Eedi), Carnegie Learning, and Carnegie Mellon University. The pilots will test a range of interventions to improve academic achievement, such as algorithms to identify student misconceptions about math and an AI-powered math tutor accessible via WhatsApp. We look forward to supporting these innovative projects as they continue to roll out to classrooms across the country, both through funding and continued research management support from J-PAL North America staff. Read more about the projects on our Education funded projects page »

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The impact of teaching teachers to use computer-assisted learning on student math performance

Computer-assisted learning (CAL) is a promising approach to facilitate more personalized learning, but does its efficacy depend on how teachers implement it? Researchers conducted two randomized evaluations to test the impact of integrating CAL in elementary and middle school mathematics instruction in the United States. In one evaluation, after one week of being directed to practice a randomly assigned concept in CAL, students' math performance improved on that concept. In a school year-long evaluation of a coaching intervention to support teachers in implementing CAL, test score improvements were concentrated among elementary school students—with no improvements for junior high students—and among those in classrooms with higher weekly CAL practice time. Read more about the results in a new evaluation summary »

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The impact of early childhood parenting interventions on child learning: A systematic review and meta-analysis

A new review paper by J-PAL North America Associate Director of Policy Kim Dadisman, J-PAL affiliate Phil Oreopoulos (University of Toronto), and Andre Nickow presents a comprehensive meta-analysis of randomized evaluations that estimate the impacts of early childhood parenting programs on learning outcomes. The review compares evaluations of several parenting programs across countries, curricula type, delivery model, and implementation quality. Learn more about the key findings »

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Evidence shows how to improve SNAP take up and increase food security in the United States

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an effective anti-hunger program, but there are thousands of eligible households who are not enrolled. Congress is currently negotiating updates to SNAP legislation—a unique opportunity to increase take-up rates. In a recent post on the J-PAL blog, J-PAL North America Co-Scientific Director Matt Notowidigdo (UChigago) and J-PAL affiliated researcher Tatiana Homonoff (NYU) highlight key evidence on effective methods to increase SNAP take up and maximize its impacts. Read more about the evidence on SNAP »

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE

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Grant and budget management

This J-PAL research resource covers practical advice for principal investigators and research staff on managing grants. We include overarching tips to help ensure smooth grant management throughout the project, define and explain common terms and conditions, discuss final deadlines and no-cost extensions, and include guidance on managing multiple grants simultaneously.

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